HE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

S. PARKES CADMAN

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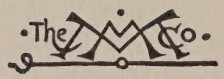

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JEREMIAH

THE MEDIATOR OF GOD

"Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord: I will not frown upon you: For I am merciful, I will not bear grudge forever."
Jeremiah 3:12.

"But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter: and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered."
Jeremiah 11:19.

"I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord."
Jeremiah 15:20.

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THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

By

S. PARKES CADMAN, D.D., LL.D.

Illustrated by

FRANK O. SALISBURY

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TO

WILLARD EARL EDMISTER

whose fidelity and wisdom have endeared him to the Church of his choice, this volume is respectfully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR

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THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WHEN the prophets appeared Israel rose to its historic mission as the servant of Jehovah. They strengthened the chosen people against an Egypt of idolatrous and polluted cults and brought them into the Promised Land of a monotheistic faith. Under the guidance of their best representatives an enlarged conception of Deity was evolved which differentiated Him as sharply from primitive gods as from Chemosh of the Moabites. By virtue of the ethical qualities which the prophets added to Israel's popular ideas of Jehovah as physical power, He became for Israel and ultimately for mankind the Moral Sovereign of the universe. Thus under Divine inspiration arose that doctrine of God which was Hebraism's noblest bequest to the believing world. With its gradual spread Israel entered upon a religious development culminating in the monotheism which unified man and creation under the control of the Everlasting One and consecrated them to His purposes.

This doctrine transformed the thinking of after ages,

established their best forms of civilization, imbued them with their governing conceptions of justice and mercy, and enabled them to see in all existence the self-expression of a benevolent Creator. The prophets did not reach their conclusions by means of scholarly research or metaphysical reasoning. They were men of visioned faith whose direct illumination from above enabled them to anticipate Jesus by conceiving God as a Being of Eternal Righteousness: a conception which has moralized every adequate idea of His Eternal Love. The difference on this issue between Hebraism and Christianity is largely verbal, since that Divine quality which the New Testament found in love the Old Testament found in righteousness. "I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick," are the words of the Lord transmitted through Ezekiel, who as priest and prophet combined in himself the chief offices of both Biblical Dispensations.

Nowhere do the Old Testament prophets present men as ignorant of God's existence, nor do they tentatively approach the mystery of His Being through the indirect methods suggested by the visible universe. They lived, moved, breathed and had their being as in His very Presence. That Presence was the primal factor of their personal consciousness. Hence they did not ascend from the world to their thought of God, but rather drew down

upon the world from their vision of God. Their habit of mind ascribed to Him the origin of all human knowledge and all human good. Their contemplations of Providence and of human life were never of the nature of a search after the Unknown Deity. They began and ended in the certitude of His existence and reign. During repeated political and religious crises when ordinary interpretations of accepted creeds failed, the prophets instilled a renewed awareness in Israel of that theocratic kingdom which was the Realm of the Real for them. Jehovah's word in their mouths was a veritable declaration of His Will at a particular moment or to meet a drastic need. It was neither an inference nor a deduction from previous revelations but an original expression of the character and the aims of the living God who made Himself known in the prophet's soul and vocal in his utterance. The gifts of the earthly instrument were controlled by a heavenly power which involved no renunciation of personality but raised all its faculties to a transcendent clearness of understanding and statement. Self-questioning and timidity were crowded out whenever the transformed individuality of the seer had become the vehicle of Jehovah's message.

In studying these renowned servants of the Lord we have to fix attention on what may be termed their high central mind. It was averse to compromise with any form of evil and to any weakening of Israel's allegiance to her Almighty Deliverer. The prophets warred without stint

upon sacerdotal excesses, barren ritualisms, non-social tyrannies, heathen idolatries and the superstitions which flattered national pride and ignorance. Their declarations were in no sense mechanical; their methods varied according to their peculiarities of temperament and education. They did not hesitate to adopt hortative and other positive means for the spread of their doctrines. Until it was delivered, the word of the Lord became as a fire in their bones and a burden upon their hearts.

It is a common observation that man's profoundest spiritual experiences are beyond the compass of his speech. The deep things of God defy his narrow channels of transmission. Yet Israel's prophets creatively considered the sublimest religious realities and announced them with majestic resonance and fullness. One could quote classic passages from Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah which have in them the substance of a thousand homilies. They spoke with utmost confidence and intimacy of matters deemed inexpressible by the non-prophetic heart. But there was no trace of undue familiarity or irreverence in what they heralded abroad. Each member of this "goodly fellowship" saw the truths of justice, mercy and peace from his own viewpoint and communicated them in his own manner. None of them forgot either the unity of heaven and earth or the infinitudes that lay between them. Their nearness to Jehovah did not blind them to the vital principle that His thoughts are not our thoughts, neither

are His ways our ways. Quite otherwise, this gulf between Him and His children convinced the prophets that it could be bridged only from His side. Hence these ancient teachers, lawgivers and guides were both near and distant, humane and holy, voicing their precepts and remonstrances in diversified language which ever and anon rose to the speech of mysticism, rapture and ecstasy. The aloofness separating the idealistic from the practical and dividing thinkers and publicists into antagonistic groups, was absent from the prophets' attitude. They were so situated that they won respect for their utterances while those to whom they were addressed also derived benefit. Unlike the occult priesthoods of Egypt and Chaldea, these messengers of the Most High did not entrench themselves within a caste, nor reserve their instructions for selected circles, nor yield to the seductions of a dreaming romanticism.

They were openly identified with the princes and the people of their country. They placed before them those "forced options of life" which are imperative in their demands, refuse to be dismissed, and are none too patient with hardened hearts. Continuous power emanated from Israel's prophetic oracles even through her darkest eras. It was not the conventional kind but a procreative urge which hurled wickedness from its enthronement and exalted righteousness. Their predictions, based on a comprehensive survey of the signs of the times, were stirring

preludes to godly resolution and action on the part of the commonwealth. They melted congealed sentiment and poured it into new molds, stamping it afresh with spiritual meanings.

In the long night of Israel's defeat and ruin they became the harbingers of another and a better day. Their exquisitely tender and encouraging lyrics were not less memorable than their stern warnings and denunciations. After exile and dismemberment overwhelmed the people they loved, the prophets continued to inveigh against the desertion of God's leadership that had wrought the disaster. They excoriated the greed, jealousy, hypocrisy and treachery of their own nation as fiercely as they assailed the invading enemy.

Hard as it is to be a saint, it is even harder to chasten a flagrant and wayward State, correct its perversity, and bring it back to the authority of the Most High. This the prophets of Israel did, not once or twice but on many occasions. In doing so, they prepared the way for the Christ who embodied their messages in His own and made them essential to His Mission. Surely what in them was indispensable for Jesus is indispensable for us.

CHAPTER II

MOSES

THIS great founder of Hebrew nationality presents an impressive instance of the close relation between seemingly obscure events and exceedingly momentous consequences. There are no sound reasons for questioning the historicity of the man himself nor of the biblical traditions connected with his name. Israel's enslavement in the Egyptian province known as Goshen was not a pious invention but an abject reality which any self-respecting people would repudiate had it not actually existed. The personality of Moses, the Exodus achieved beneath his leadership and the political and religious organization he effected at Kadesh have a substantial factual origin. Hence we can confidently accept the record that its hero was a child of the enslaved Israel whose unhappy sons and daughters were commandeered by Rameses the Second for his extensive building operations. Among these were the huge storehouses discovered by Petrie at Tell Rotab and known by the name of that ruler. During his dawning manhood Moses was not ashamed of his

afflicted brethren. On the contrary, he chose their cause as his own at the risk of his life, and the bitterness of their bondage made him an ardent insurrectionist. But he had to wait on Providence for the opportune hour to strike for liberating action.

His sojourn with the Midianites had a far-reaching influence upon his divinely appointed mission. They too were descendants of Abraham and his wife Keturah; inhabitants of the desert unspoiled by the luxury of the Nile Valley, free as the ampler air they breathed, and loving freedom as Bedouins alone can love it. Separated from the contagion of contemporary idolatries, they worshipped the God of their fathers with a simplicity and purity foreign even to the Israelites themselves. Among them young Moses learned the meaning of the new yet ancient Name, Jehovah, and what its holy implications suggested. He married a daughter of the priest of the local sanctuary and their children were born while he and his wife enjoyed the healthy, carefree life of the shepherds of Midian. Yet there, as in Egypt, God's oncoming statesman and lawgiver remembered his hapless people and longed to share his liberty with them.

The familiar story of the burning bush is the literary expression of a profound spiritual experience which transformed the inmost being of the man. God acted through his desert surroundings, where shrubs consumed by fervid heat were an ordinary sight, to kindle in the

MOSES

THE FRIEND OF GOD

"And the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

Exodus 33:11.

"Whoso is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me."

Exodus 32:26.

"Now the man Moses was very meek."

Numbers 12:3.

"And Moses returned unto the Lord and said: 'Oh this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them a god of gold. Yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.' And the Lord said unto Moses: 'Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of my book.'"

Numbers 12:3.

"One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."

Exodus 12:49.

"And Moses said unto (Joshua) him: 'Art thou jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them!'"

Numbers 11:29.

soul of Moses a sacred fire that would not die down. Like Wesley in far-off centuries to be, this chosen servant of the Lord felt his heart "strangely warmed." He was no longer vague and aimless. He had heard the call of his Maker and this more immediate contact with Him sealed his destiny. So have all God's prophets had similar psychological backgrounds and sources which equipped them for their work.

Thus the experience of Moses was the notable pinnacle in his religious landscape. Since the Jehovah of the burning bush was the supreme Disposer, why should His people remain in servitude to any earthly tyrant? An imperative obligation to accomplish their release was laid upon the nascent Emancipator. He felt constrained to return to Egypt and demand that Pharaoh set the Hebrews free. At first, however, the making of such a demand seemed sheer madness to Moses. Obstacles, apparently insurmountable, forbade any hope of its fulfillment and he framed numerous excuses for its evasion only to find them futile. The war of inclination and prudence against duty was persistent until finally duty conquered. Jehovah convinced His ambassador of the absolute and eternal righteousness of the Divine Will. Strong in that conviction, he ceased endeavoring to argue himself out of doing what he ought to do, determined to return to the land of the dreaded oppressor and confront him with the astounding proposal that Israel must

be liberated. If the yesterdays of Moses had been dimmed by uncertainty and attempted compromise, his tomorrows were to be bright with a fadeless radiance.

It is perhaps useless to speculate how much of legend is interwoven with his regenerating process and its sequences. Nor should we be surprised that annalists of varying complexions followed the custom of the period by coloring the marvelous career of Moses with accounts of phenomenal plagues and sorceries. The significant matter is that "the Israelites escaped out of bondage" and brought with them man's inherent right to political and moral freedom. The imaginative treatment of this epoch-making event is a testimony to its creative force which tradition, poetry and art have since magnified. Their vindication is that justice and freedom were to be regarded not only as Divine attributes but also as coercive human ideals. The Lord's mandate, "Let my people go," has been the watchword of successive generations, and is still proclaimed in behalf of those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Under the prophet anointed for Israel's deliverance the erstwhile bondsmen came to the crossing of the Red Sea. According to the later and idealized account of the priestly writer Moses lifted his hand over the hindering waters, and these divided to stand like walls on either side of the Hebrews as they passed through the empty

channel dry-shod. According to the Jehovist writer an east wind blew during the night, causing the waters to recede at a shallow ford near the Bitter Lakes through which the Suez Canal now runs. The latter account is preferable as explanatory of a providential interference which saved these fugitive helots from their pursuers. They and their descendants never forgot that on that day and by that act God registered Himself in the history of mankind. It became the birthday of the nation, henceforth celebrated annually with gladness and thanksgiving.

Three months after leaving Egypt, Moses brought his untutored hosts to the region of his earlier vision and enablement. Upon the steppes of Mount Sinai they received the nucleus of those laws which are enshrined in Judaism and Christianity. It should be noted, however, that their legislation and organization during the nearly forty years at Kadesh did not proceed without the aid of the Midianites. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, advised him concerning the administration of justice. Probably the Decalogue itself was enriched by the spiritual knowledge gained under Divine guidance by the Semitic and other races. The contention of learned authorities that what was revealed to Moses was afterwards elaborated and ceremonialized is true. His majestic personality was the logical center for these additions. The lofty claim that the Ten Commandments were directly revealed by

Jehovah to His minister may also be in part duplicated elsewhere by similar claims made in the literature of that ancient world.

But these considerations do not lessen the historic fact that under Moses Israel discarded her polytheism and entered into a covenant with Jehovah which then and afterwards renewed in her the loveliness and hope of youth to which Hosea and Jeremiah refer in the second chapters of their respective books.

In selecting and codifying a body of incomparable laws for the moral and religious training of an essential nation, Moses wrought a timeless work for mankind. For through this nation, and not through its more powerful and educated neighbors, the Decalogue entered into the life and practice of the Western world. There it still is what it has ever been—the massive base not alone of Christendom but of at least two other forms of civilization.

The foundling of the riverside lived to decree the fate of nations and empires yet unborn. The impetuous youth who fled from the scene of his fatal violence into the desert became the lawgiver and prophet of his people and one of the few illustrious magistrates and benefactors of the race. In the limited list of governing spirits for crucial eras only One stands above Moses. And it is no detraction from him to say that what he began was perfected by that other Babe who slept in the hay of

the stable at Bethlehem as Moses His forerunner had slept in the reeds of the Nile.

We see him serene and undismayed when the waters of the Red Sea blocked Israel's exit from captivity and death. We see him confident, when food supplies failed Jehovah's children, that He would provide for them. The manna sent from above, the sweetening of Marah's bitter waters, and the fountain gushing from Rephidim's flinty rock rewarded his courage and faith. The recreant Hebrews who lusted for the fleshpots of Egypt or resented the perils of their wilderness pilgrimage, watched their leader's daily passage through the camp to the Tent of the Presence where he communed with God. Their rebellious worship of the Golden Calf kindled his indignation because it was a thankless betrayal of their true devotion. Beset by numberless difficulties of administration, by jealousy, repining and sedition, and by the machinations of open and secret foes, Moses repeatedly demonstrated that extraordinary personality is the solution of problems otherwise insoluble. In dreariest days and darkest nights he persuaded his people to follow the cloud and pillar of fire. The founder of Israel's nationality and religion, he nevertheless ascribed their origin to Jehovah and their perpetuity to the observance of His commandments. Yet it was Moses who welded into oneness the demoralized kindred tribes. He introduced them to the God of the covenant and the God of the covenant

to them. Without the assurance of His Presence he would have preferred a place in the rude desert to the smiling land of plenty ahead. Wonderful as his experiences of that Presence were, he craved the beatific vision of Its actual splendor to fortify him against his seasons of doubt and perplexity. But he discovered that the Deity's effulgence was forever beyond the scope of human comprehension. Yet though he might not see God's face, he could appropriate His justice, His mercy and His goodness. These gifts so manifestly became his other self that he drew the weak-hearted and the desperate to him as flame is drawn to flame. According to one account prolonged years of arduous labor did not abate his physical strength nor his intellectual and moral mastery. Another account tells of their wear and tear upon him.

In either case at last his career was complete, his hundred and twenty-one years rounded out. Forty of them—and the best at that—had been spent in the great enterprise now on the verge of triumph. He knew that death had marked him for its own and that his loyal follower Joshua must assume the captaincy he was about to relinquish. Alone on Nebo's summit—yet not alone for Jehovah was with him—Moses looked down on Moab's expansive landscape and saw beyond the Jordan River the land of hope and glory which he could not enter. Behind him was the past over which the gods themselves

are said to have no power. Yet it was his passport to immortality, for in its labyrinthine windings he had found the only true God. The pathos of that final scene on Nebo was eclipsed by its spiritual triumph. From thence he ascended and "Jehovah buried him" as He buries all His heroes. Even the secret of his grave was safeguarded by the Eternal One.[1]

No portrait in the Old Testament's large gallery is more attractive than that of this venerated servant of the Lord. The book of Deuteronomy which records his statesmanship and his deeds is one of the few epoch-making volumes of humanity. If we ask whence came such a superman, the answer is given in a single sentence of the New Testament: Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible." [2] While he kept his lonely vigils in the desert, before the burning bush, within the cloud that capped Sinai's Mount, in the Tent of the Presence; at all times and in all places, the foremost representative of theocracy sojourned in the Realm of the Real. There his soul was nourished to proportions of magnitude, there he carved his name on the conscience and the reason of the race. Let us hear the testimony of Holy Scripture: "And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, in all the signs and the

[1] Deuteronomy 34:6.
[2] Hebrews 11:27.

wonders, which Jehovah sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought, in the sight of all Israel." [3]

[3] Deuteronomy 34:10-12.

CHAPTER III

ELIJAH

THE school of prophecy to which Elijah belonged began with roving "ecstatics" whose eccentric behavior drew attention to their messages. From these bands came Nathan and Ahijah, and also that son of thunder, the fearless Tishbite of Gilead, who wore the garb and ate the food of the rustics of the hills and despised the enervating luxury and debauchery of the capital and the court. Prophecy was destined to reach sublimer heights than this shaggy lover of solitude attained. Yet what he lacked in width of vision and literary capacity was largely compensated by his tumultuous energy and daring action. Moreover, his brave adventures definitely committed Israel's prophetic movement to the ethical note which afterwards distinguished it. And if her later seers were indebted to Elijah for their emphasis on the "sacrifices of righteousness" [1] he in turn owed to Moses the desert ideals of his courageous ministry. It was at Horeb-Sinai, where the lawgiver received his charisma, that Elijah was

[1] Deuteronomy 33:19.

confirmed in his stand against the profligacies of the Baal cult.

His career was predetermined by the ascendancy of the dynasty of Omri, the marriage of whose son Ahab to the Phoenician princess Jezebel confronted the nation with the choice between her deity and Jehovah. The only kings who ruled over a united Israel were David and Solomon. Saul began his reign auspiciously and ended it in disaster and death on the battlefield. David dwelt for a time in the shadow of that "Divine Presence" which was the source of prophetic utterance. Solomon was the son of David's adulterous love for Bathsheba, a love which troubled his later life and was doomed to bear unwholesome fruit in that of Solomon. This monarch solidified the Kingdom David had won, extended the intellectual horizons of the nation, conquered surrounding peoples, received tribute from them and constructed magnificent buildings, especially the Temple and the royal palace at Jerusalem. In this city everyone was to be saved after his own fashion, for which reason Solomon erected temples to the gods of all the nations which had dealings with the capital. He made it the center of an imposing empire; but his imperial dominion was founded on the quicksands of sensual materialism and financial folly. The spectacles which dazzled the Queen of Sheba and other visitors to Jerusalem were dearly purchased. Forced labor and heavy taxation sapped the manhood and con-

ELIJAH

THE WARRIOR OF GOD

"O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have all these things at Thy word."

I Kings 18:36.

"And, behold the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains—; but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, a still small voice."

I Kings 19:11.

sumed the substance of the country, a condition aptly described by Goldsmith's lines:

> *"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,*
> *Where wealth accumulates and men decay."*

After Solomon's death the people petitioned his son Rehoboam for relief from their excessive load. His contemptuous rejection of their plea provoked the revolt which separated all the tribes from his kingship except Judah (including Simeon) and a part of Benjamin. The rebels set up a second monarchy under Jeroboam, a redoubtable warrior of Ephraimite descent. The union of the twelve tribes which even under David had been loosely construed was now finally dissolved. The dissolution was fraught with important consequences for the national Faith. Since David had associated that Faith with the southern capital, the emotional attachment to it, everywhere felt, spelt danger for the recently organized Northern Kingdom. To offset this danger, rival shrines were established at Bethel and Dan where the worship of Jehovah was practiced side by side with that of Baal. The foreign wives of Solomon and Ahab and the retainers they brought with them demanded the manifold forms of Baalism, and their demands were granted. The Phoenician Ashtoroth, the Ammonite Milcom, the Sidonian Melkart, the Moabite Chemosh were deified in and

around Jerusalem and Samaria by devotees whose licentious rites defiled the chosen people.

Fertility cults flourished among the Canaanites whom Israel had never been able to expel from her territories. The Northern Kingdom adopted the bull reflected in Aaron's Golden Calf. King Jeroboam endeavored to tighten his recent grasp on the crown by "sacrificing unto the calves that he had made," [2] thereby making the worship of Jehovah under the form of an image not only legal but popular and authoritative. This infamy afterwards became proverbial in the saying "His sin wherewith he (Jeroboam) made Israel to sin." [3] His successors, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri and Omri, perpetuated these idolatries. Although princes and people still observed Jehovah's worship they vitiated it by reducing Him to the level of Baalism's deities and by the practice of its bestial rites and ceremonies. Notwithstanding the general turpitude, a few vigorous protestants were vocal in the Northern Kingdom. Patriotic spirits who inherited the nobler traditions of Moses viewed its degeneracy with dismay and detested its apostasy. There was a dearth of justice in the land, social bonds were shattered, corruption was rife; the chosen nation stood on the edge of the abyss which afterwards swallowed up the decadent empires of Nineveh and Babylon.

[2] 1 Kings 12:32.
[3] 1 Kings 16:26.

Such were the perilous circumstances under which Elijah began his fiery crusade. Whether he was a thoroughgoing monotheist who believed Jehovah to be the one true God or merely one god among others, is an open question. But indisputably for Elijah He was Israel's Jehovah. To His sovereignty the prophet gave an intense meaning in deeds which challenged the conscience of his countrymen. "No heart is pure which is not passionate, no virtue is safe which is not enthusiastic." Nothing less than the prophet's fervid zeal could have defeated Baalism's formidable array. Its worship was embedded in the national mind and congenial to its lusts. As we have noted, Elijah's war upon it was waged chiefly in Ahab's reign. His father, Omri, chose the notorious Jezebel for Ahab's consort, hoping by their union to strengthen his rule with the wealthy merchants of the Mediterranean coast. But the marriage proved disastrous for all concerned. To be sure, after Ahab's accession to the throne he revealed some political sagacity by making peace with the Southern Kingdom of Judah and obtaining an intermittent control over Damascus. He also helped to arrest the westward march of the Assyrian hosts under Shalmaneser the Second at the battle of Karkar in 854 B.C. But his spasmodic statesmanship collapsed beneath the wily greed of Jezebel and he connived at her lecherous innovations.

This woman, whose name has become a synonym for

intrigue and persecution, belonged to the prosperous city of Tyre. Her father, Eth-Baal, formerly high priest of Baal, had raised himself to the Tyrian throne by the murder of his predecessor. His patron deity was Melkart, a god whose worship was encased in lasciviousness. Jezebel introduced the Tyrian cult of her ancestors into the Northern Kingdom and employed every possible means for its spread among her husband's subjects. Its frenzies, its phallicism, its sacred prostitutes, its severance from life's ordinary decencies, aroused Elijah's indignant antagonism, and Ahab's pusillanimous surrender to his foreign-born queen accentuated the crisis. Although pledged to Jehovah's worship the recreant monarch built a Baal temple and altar at Samaria, where he also erected the symbolic "asherah" or pole. In brief, he allowed Jezebel a free hand, whereupon she conspired with her swarm of Tyrian priests and soothsayers to exterminate the historic religion of Israel.

Meanwhile a prolonged drought devastated the land and disposed its people to welcome Elijah's unexpected appearance on the scene. During the famine caused by the drought he had sheltered with a widow of Zarephath whose son the prophet had raised from the dead. "The ravens" which were said to have brought him food were probably a band of nearby Arabs bearing that tribal name.

Elijah at once sought out Ahab and told him that the

drought was a Divine penalty for his infidelity, and he challenged the court and its retinues to an open contest for Heaven's approval. What followed is in all likelihood a dramatic portrayal of the heated controversies between the many champions of Baalism and Jehovah's solitary prophet. "Build fires," he cried, "lay on sacrifices, then pray for fire from above to consume the offering; and the God who answereth by fire let him be God"! No sooner had the response confirmed Elijah's faith than the drought was broken, the rains descended in torrential floods on Mount Carmel and fattened the soil of Megiddo's plain beneath.

Jezebel, as able as she was crafty, was fully aware of the prophet's audacious strength. She knew he would come to Carmel though Israel in arms had barred his way, and that her priests need expect no consideration from him. When she heard of his ferocious triumph over them she swore vengeance on Jehovah's advocate. After Elijah's titanic struggle a profound reaction seized him. Fearing for his safety the man who had overborne a seditious nation fled from a vindictive woman. The refuge he sought had a lasting importance. Succored by angelic food to find it, in the strength of that meat he traveled forty days and nights till he came to Horeb, "the mount of God," the Sinai of earlier times, forever linked with Israel's memories of the giving of the Law by Moses.

Why did the prophet undertake so arduous a journey?

Because he fain would commune with his great predecessor and like him find Jehovah for himself. Abraham's children always thought of Sinai as God's dwelling place, and what they thus conceived Elijah actually experienced. At Horeb he waited for the Lord in a cave which might have been the secret spot wherein He had revealed Himself to Moses. While Elijah took cover there a hurricane swept across the mountain. But Jehovah was not in its tempestuous rage. Neither was He in the subsequent earthquake that shook the prophet's hiding place, nor in the flaming fire which drove him into the open. Then came an outward calm which symbolized the tranquillity that stole into Elijah's weary and despondent soul. "Consider that God and you are alone in the universe," said Thomas à Kempis, "and you will have great peace in your heart." In that transforming moment of his life Elijah learned that not by might nor by power, but by God's indwelling Spirit of righteousness and justice, were His purposes accomplished in man.

Fortified by his contact with the Almighty, the prophet of the juniper tree of doubt and of the cave luminous with revelation returned to Samaria. There he heard how Ahab and Jezebel had stolen the vineyard and encompassed the death of the farmer Naboth whose small holding adjacent to the palace was coveted by the guilty pair. While they gloated over their illgotten gains Elijah broke in on them and announced the punishment befitting

their flagrant crimes. He forewarned Ahab that his blood would be shed in the place where he had shed the blood of Naboth, and he told Jezebel that the dogs of the street should devour her body. The ninth chapter of the Second Book of Kings contains the gruesome details of the tragedies which fulfilled Elijah's prediction.

It was quite in order that "wonder stories" should crystallize around the prophet who towered in solitary grandeur over his age and his contemporaries. In those primitive eras legend rather than history embalmed every memorable event and character. Later generations asserted that ravens fed Elijah, that he miraculously replenished the widow's supply of meal and oil, that he restored her dead child to life, that he locked up the heavens for three years and afterwards brought down fire and rain from them, and that when the time of his translation came horsemen and chariots robed in unscorching flame bore him upward to the God he had served. We are not so much concerned about these encrustations of folklore as we are with the impressive personality behind them and the reasons that produced them.

Their explanation is that Elijah's intervention for what he deemed essential and true inspired the popular imagination of successive generations. He lived in a chaotic period when might had well-nigh obliterated right. The worship of the one holy God was degraded by superstition and obscenity. It was his mission to defy might, re-

establish right and purge the nation's religion. He might have said in the words of Goethe, "I can promise to be sincere but not impartial." Both he and his adversaries struck for definite objects and endured hard blows in consequence. His hazardous conquests were the prizes of courage. It was necessary for the religious development of his countrymen that Elijah should contend unto death against what he deemed a fatal national destiny. In these respects he incurred no blame and requires no defense. Nor is it surprising that he was not free from lower ideals. This dauntless Bedouin went ragged and unshorn, occasional frenzies came upon him, and his jubilant moods were frequently the preludes to dejection deepening into despair. He was of a barbarous age as well as the Lord's servant. Hence he hewed down the priests of a destructive faith and invoked heaven's wrath upon his foes.

But he proclaimed the Jehovah of Sinai and His Will for Israel when the tides of a malefic idolatry were running swiftly against him. By so doing Elijah lived up to the meaning of his name. "El" is a shortened form of "Elohim" as "Jah" is of "Jehovah." It was fitting therefore that the seer who defended the fundamental verity of all spiritual knowledge should have been known by the name which signified "Jehovah is God."

Enough has been said to show that Elijah's religion was of the type which rises above earthly changes, above op-

posing creeds of doctrine and practice, above conflicting systems of worship. His was the religion created by a realization that as a man he must stand face to face with his Maker, and that his being was given him for this purpose. A hieratic grandeur overspread his monumental figure. He seemed to gather into himself those loftier hopes which have made his memory affluent for good among Jews and Christians alike. He needed neither tomb nor epitaph to perpetuate a name than which no braver glows in the golden roll of Israel's prophets. The New Testament's reference to Elijah as present with Moses on the Mount of Christ's Transfiguration rendered him an honor he richly deserved. For with him Israel's conception of the God of all righteousness entered upon a new phase and gained a higher ethical level.

CHAPTER IV

AMOS

AMOS lived when Israel was the strongest nation between the Nile and the Euphrates. Jeroboam the Second, the aggressive monarch of the Northern Kingdom, reigned over a realm which bade fair to rival that of David for size and influence. Its ancient foe, Assyria, had been checked, and Jeroboam thereupon promptly seized the opportunity to extend his territory and political weight. King Uzziah of the southern province of Judah adopted a similar policy. Samaria, the northern capital, boasted its ivory palaces, houses of hewn stone, gayly caparisoned horses and chariots and other tokens of oriental pomp and circumstance. The rich drank the most costly wines and anointed their bodies with precious oils. Feasting and revelry abounded, the corrupt national religion encouraged public routs and orgies, and for a time all went merry as a marriage bell.

But it was a surface prosperity undermined by pagan rites, nonsocial practices and outrageous political measures. Elements of Canaanite heathenism flourished in

Israel's sanctuaries. The shrines at Dan and Bethel were scenes of fleshly indulgences which mocked the lip homage paid to Jehovah. The notorious vices connected with Assyria's symbolic bulls were commonly practiced. The wealthy increased in pride and substance, the poor suffered still greater penury and deprivation. Israel had conquered in war only to be defeated in peace. Widespread iniquities poisoned her life and its degeneracy grieved the faithful Hebrews to whom God's honor was dear.

In 760 B.C. when this fool's paradise was at the top of its form the people flocked to Bethel for one of their customary carousals. While its excesses ran wild, an unknown and ill-clad tiller of the soil forced his way through the crowd of frenzied Baalites. He was none other than Amos, a shepherd of Tekoa, a hilly region belonging to Judaea. On his own showing this obscure peasant was "no prophet, neither a prophet's son." But his daily tasks as "a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees" were congenial to meditation, and his secluded habits deepened his detestation of the surrounding saturnalia. No official sanction was vouchsafed him and certainly the priestly cult did not countenance this unsophisticated yet vigorous intruder at Bethel on that memorable occasion. But Amos had long felt the constraint to testify for the God of his fathers when and where his witness was most needed. The religious outlook in his own Judaea was none too promising. Yet since that province

owned Jerusalem and the Temple there was some hope for it. On the other hand he lived so near the Northern Kingdom's frontier that his acquaintance with its open wickedness kindled his indignation, and he brooded long and darkly over the obscenities that degraded it.

Such solitaries as Amos spelt danger to these arrogant iniquities concerning which he chose to obey God rather than man. "Jehovah took me," he declared, "from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." [1] Before those who heard him at Bethel realized what was happening the shrill plaint of his funereal dirge silenced their drunken chantings and invocations. He reminded them of life's solemn meanings and raised his lamentation for a nation honeycombed with immorality and weakened by injustice:

"The virgin of Israel has fallen;
She shall no more rise;
She is cast down upon her land;
There is none to raise her up." [2]

Luxurious and licentious Bethel was astonished by this unauthorized interruption. Its dainty devotees were incensed, its hordes of ignorant worshippers infuriated. To predict the destruction of God's chosen ones was for them the acme of blasphemy. But to assign that destruction to

[1] Amos 7:15.
[2] Amos 5:2.

AMOS

THE SPOKESMAN OF GOD

"For the Lord God will do nothing, But He revealeth His counsel unto His servants the prophets. . . ."

Amos 3:7.

"The Lord God hath spoken, Who can but prophesy?"

Amos 3:8.

"Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live;
And so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you."

Amos 5:14.

"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; It may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

Amos 5:15.

"Let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Amos 5:24.

God himself was sheer insanity. So Amaziah, the priest of the desecrated sanctuary, commanded the intrepid herdsman to flee to his own land of Judah and prophesy there. Was not Bethel "the King's Chapel and the King's Court," the shrine of royal patronage and popular indorsement? Amos rounded on the time-serving functionary with an ominous warning. "Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land." [3]

Evidently Tekoa's uncouth rustic was armed with graphic, biting speech, between the lines of which his readers get startling glimpses of the age he opposed. It was one destitute of depth and earnestness. Its leaders in Church and State were selfish, debased and depraved. Its privileged children were filled with levity, caprice and abandonment. Its unprivileged groups were oppressed by tyranny and debauched by corrupt idolatries. Then indeed was

"Time a maniac scattering dust,
And life a fury flinging flame."

Enervating wealth, ruinous taxation, political jobbery, maladministration and the open sale of justice, combined

[3] Amos 7:17.

with endless retinues of priests, courtesans and their expensive habits, worked havoc in Israel. The incredible thing is that these abominations were done in the name of her one true and only God.

And why not? There was nothing in temporal conditions to indicate He had withdrawn His promised aid from the chosen people. On the contrary, they stoutly maintained that He was waiting to be gracious to them. Was it not rumored in the streets and market places that they would yet attain the summit of earthly power and govern their fallen foes on every side? Such was the comfortable doctrine of the ecclesiastics and politicians, and of course it met with hearty approval. Amos launched his unflinching invective on skeptical ears. He declared the national worship of Jehovah profane because it was offered with unclean hands, and preached the then strange idea that Jehovah's sovereignty was not confined to Israel but covered Damascus and Philistia, Tyre and Edom, Ammon and Moab. Therefore He was directly implicated in their rise and fall.

Such comprehensive teaching shed a very different light upon that "day of the Lord" to which Israel's priests and soothsayers alluded with complacent optimism. When it did come, said Amos, it would be an era of darkness and dread, which he likened to a man fleeing from a lion to be confronted by a bear, and running from the bear only to be bitten by a serpent. Judgment against

violated justice and dishonesty was the governing note of his predictions. "I will visit upon you all your iniquities" was Jehovah's word in the prophet's mouth.[4] The Divine visitation would take the form of drought and famine, of blight and mildew, of locust and plague. Worst of all, Assyria, the mighty foe lurking on the border, would march into the land and destroy it. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" was the ominous conclusion of the prophet's indictment.[5]

Nevertheless, hope tarried on the threshold of doom. But it was hope qualified by irreducible requirements. God would fain be merciful, yet He was immovably against the rebellious and impenitent. Himself righteous, He required righteousness in His people. "Seek ye me, and ye shall live"; "hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." [6] Such were the exhortations that relieved the prophet's unflinching denunciation. Then as always a contrite people had access to a pardoning Deity.

Did they find Him? We do not know. Certainly the officials did not. Amaziah, Baal's priest at Bethel, was typical of the haughty hierarchs whose personal interests were involved in the preservation of costly cults and com-

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[4] Amos 3:2.
[5] Amos 4:1-12.
[6] Amos 5:4, 15.

mercialized rites. They were compelled to reap the harvest of their own sowing. Meanwhile God said to them through Amos: "I hate, I despise your feasts and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." [7]

These solemn annunciations enforce the essential truth that Amos was the embodiment of the moral law which he conceived as Jehovah's edict. In that period of conflicting beliefs and practices He was for the prophet the God of absolute justice. National boundaries vanished before His limitless equity. This spacious concept gave an hitherto unexplored spiritual height and depth to the message of Amos. The rule of right, the ethical symmetries of character, the requirements of conscience, could no longer be regarded as provincial. They prevailed wherever God's all-regnant Spirit penetrated, and no subject mind could escape their control.

Thus to Amos in his lonely vigil Israel's Jehovah began to appear as the God of other races. As a great river widens to meet the ocean, so Hebraism here made its first approach toward a universal Faith. After the prophet had

[7] Amos 5:21-24.

delivered his soul he returned to his sheep and his sycamores, and bequeathed to all time the substance of that deliverance. It is ours today as the record of a marvelous and mysterious "Voice" of the Lord. Behind the herdsman's achievement was his unshaken confidence in Jehovah's eternal righteousness. Being what He was He could not condone wilful sin. Being omnipotent He could use men and nations for the furtherance of His purposes. Moral integrity born of visioned faith and a clear perception of the social forces then operating made Amos a true successor of Moses and Elijah. His epitaph can be taken from his own writings: "The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" [8]

[8] Amos 3:8.

CHAPTER V

HOSEA

THE overtone of the message of Amos was tragedy. He felt no such emotional restraint as might have been his had his ministry been exercised in his native Judaea. Since Northern Israel was not his first love he appealed against her to the God of judgment unto condemnation. With the execution of that judgment matters ended so far as Amos was concerned. What was to follow he did not indicate, but it is found in Hosea's tender and compassionate messages. This prophet, born in the Northern Kingdom, was not less aware of its crying evils than his inflexible predecessor. Nor did he lack his vivid, concrete imagination, or the rhythm of his passionate utterance. On the contrary Hosea disclosed his mind toward those evils in descriptions even more somber and telling than those of Amos. But he could not be satisfied with the purely negative or punitive aspects of Israel's downfall, nor did he believe that Jehovah's final decree was one of wrath and repudiation.

It is interesting to observe that Hosea was the last na-

tive-born seer who rebuked the Northern realm, and that he was the only one who committed his prophecies to writing. With him the divine succession ended in Northern Israel. His career extended beyond the closing phase of Jeroboam the Second to the turbulent conditions which followed that king's death and continued until the accession of Pekah in 736 B.C. During this period of sedition and anarchy Assyria's imperialism again assumed menacing proportions. In 745 B.C., the very year Jeroboam died, Tiglath-Pileser the Third, an able and unscrupulous soldier, seized the Assyrian throne and ushered in another era of military dominion. The first ten years of his reign were spent in constant wars against the peoples of the north, the south and the west. Northern Israel's disintegration was revealed by the fact that in a single decade six monarchs succeeded Jeroboam the Second, some of whom were assassinated by their successors. Evidently the nation was undermined with plots and stratagems and ripe for conquest. It vainly endeavored to avoid this fate by combining with other smaller states in a defensive coalition to resist Assyria's encroachments. The outcome was Tiglath-Pileser's victorious campaign in 733 B.C. He captured Damascus, ravaged Israel's territory, carried a large number of her leaders into exile and subjected all antagonists to heavy tribute.

Tiglath-Pileser was succeeded by Shalmaneser the Fifth. Hosea, who was then King of Israel, believed the

hour had come to throw off the Assyrian yoke. He refused to pay tribute and sought Egypt's coöperation. Whereupon Shalmaneser promptly laid siege to Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom, and closely invested it during three years of famine and desolation. Meanwhile Shalmaneser died and Sargon reigned over Assyria in his stead. He finally captured Samaria in 722 B.C., and expatriated over twenty-seven thousand Israelites who were settled throughout his empire. Colonists from Assyria were likewise transferred to Samaria and parts adjacent, according to a garrisoning policy practiced by Assyria and Babylon. These retaliations completed the ruin of the Northern Kingdom. Its overthrow as a national entity has given rise to much useless speculation concerning "The Lost Ten Tribes." The truth is they were never "lost," and what became of them is perfectly clear. The twenty-seven thousand and more Hebrews deported by Sargon were assimilated by surrounding nations, while those who remained at home intermarried with his colonists. From their union sprang the Samaritans of mixed descent whose offspring is now reduced to a scanty remnant of about a hundred souls, occupying Mount Nablous and rapidly nearing extinction. Of course Sargon's settlers brought their gods with them, and the resultant religion became as mixed as the races. The compiler of the "Books of the Kings," a proud Israelite of the Southern Kingdom, viewed these hybrids with

ironical contempt. "They feared Jehovah," he exclaimed, "and served their own gods!" [1]

Hosea probably began his prophetic ministry some years before the death of Jeroboam the Second. He witnessed the years of his nation's travail, and as a genuine patriot he suffered in her calamities as though they had been his own. The influence of his predecessor Amos prevailed in his utterances, but Hosea went deeper and dealt with the inner springs of conduct. Amos was the herald of Jehovah's indestructible justice. Hosea extolled His everlasting goodness and mercy. If Amos declared in tones of thunder "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" Hosea pleaded in accents of entreaty, "O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God!" [2] Amos did not ignore God's clemency but he regarded His justice as its purifying attribute. Nor did Hosea ignore God's justice, but he emphasized the superiority of His loving kindness. Both prophets testified from their personal experience. While brooding in Tekoa's wilds over the enormity of Israel's guilt, Amos observed in Nature's processes the inevitableness of cause and effect and by so doing he obtained that conviction of its surety in the moral realm which shaped his predictions. The law of the seed's fruition obtained in Israel's spiritual wilderness as it did in the natural wilderness of Tekoa. What she sowed she must reap.

[1] 2 Kings 17:33.
[2] Hosea 14:1.

Hosea, on the other hand, waged a far more severe struggle within himself. The domestic upheaval to which he refers in the opening chapters of his book ought not to be treated as an allegory. Unquestionably it was an actual personal tragedy for the prophet. According to the generally accepted explanation, he had fallen in love with a beautiful young woman whose name and that of her father indicated the low social status of their family. He soon discovered that she was an unfaithful wife and that the children born to her may not have been his. The profound probings of this affliction released the nethermost springs of the prophet's sympathetic imagination. He saw that Israel had betrayed Jehovah as his wife Gomer had betrayed him. When her children were born he gave them symbolic names, a custom followed by later prophets. The first, a son, he called Jezreel, to signify the judgment hanging over Israel; the second, a daughter, he named Lo-ruhamah, meaning "there is no mercy;" the third, another son, Lo-ammi, or "not my people," which may have suggested a denial of Hosea's paternity.

The parents separated, but whether Gomer abandoned Hosea or he put her away is not quite clear. In either case she became a profligate woman, of whom her paramours soon tired and offered her for sale as a slave. But her injured husband could not forget the bride he had cherished. So he took her back, put her under restraint

and apart from himself, in the hope that his sacrificial devotion would change her character and revive her love for him.

Some later scholars have reverted to the earlier view that Gomer was a notorious prostitute whom Hosea married for prophetic reasons; his purpose being to draw Israel's attention to the disloyalty and unworthiness which must be punished by exile before the nation could have another opportunity to renew its fealty to Jehovah. The two narrations of this strange incident given in chapters one and three add to the difficulty of its interpretation. Their careful examination shows, however, that both accounts portray not two stages in Hosea's marital experience but one and the same event. The prophet may have bought Gomer in the slave market and after placing her under discipline received her as his wife, to symbolize the nation's perfidy and the possibility of its restoration.

Such is the sad story, perhaps somewhat rationalized or allegorized, yet told as sober truth. Hosea used its abnormal character as an image of Jehovah's relation to Israel. Had He not chosen the despised bondsmen of Egypt to be His people, allied Himself with them in their helplessness and misery, and lavished His gracious favors upon them? Notwithstanding these privileges Israel's heart was besotted by waywardness and infidelity. In the prophet's arresting words, when other gods enticed her she took the price of hire from false lovers and played the harlot.

She offered gratitude and praise to the Baalim for the products of the soil, and denied that her increase was of Jehovah. Gomer's adultery was a parable in action of Israel's spiritual treachery. Yet as Hosea could not surrender Gomer to the human wolves who would have destroyed her, body and soul, neither could Jehovah surrender the chosen nation to its foes.

This was the gracious reality which entranced the prophet. On the eve of national catastrophe he raised the poignant cry: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? . . . my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath." [3] The more moving scenes of this prophecy, which seem to blend the pain of disillusionment and despair with some of the noblest elements of Divine compassion, remind us of the searching force of the apostolic word: "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away." [4] But "love never faileth." The inspiration of Amos had not carried him to this summit of faith in the Lord's redemptive mercy. The last glimpse we have of him gives no hint of Hosea's selfless

[3] Hosea 11:8-9.
[4] 1 Corinthians 13:8.

devotion and tenderness of spirit. He lived and died under the shadow of terrible retributive justice unrelieved by a gleam of hope. In contrast, the very wounds in Hosea's heart became channels of a beneficent revelation for the healing of the hurt of God's people.

The doctrine that His forgiving grace governed His intercourse with universal humanity was then unknown to Israel. Moses may have suggested it but it had not been emphasized. Men had conceived Jehovah as a God to be feared and obeyed, not as a God whose love wooed their love in return. By stressing this cardinal truth Hosea achieved prophetic originality. His initiative, vouchsafed by the Indwelling Spirit, took the unprecedented step of interpreting the Divine love by that of the human. His plea was that God could not be less benevolent than man. The suffering love of the prophet adumbrated the suffering love of his Maker. Since despite her profligacy he had sought Gomer's highest good, would not Jehovah do even more to rescue His rebellious children and maintain His purpose in them? Hosea's agonizing exclamation, "O Gomer, how can I let thee go?" was the echo of that infinite appeal, "O Israel, how can I let thee go?" This seer of the far past might have said in Tennyson's words,

"And all is well, tho' faith and form
Be sunder'd in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm."

Hosea anticipated its fuller utterance which should yet shake the heavens and the earth. No prophet of Israel outranked him in appreciation of the Eternal Mercy. Others more conspicuous for literary and constructive gifts were to supplement his vision but none could invalidate it. The perfect love which casts out fear involves mutual choice, mutual confidence, mutual trust. Though unsatisfied love is the source of pain, it endures that pain in order that the satisfaction of a complete response might be won. In these ways Hosea interpreted the unique message dictated by his afflicted heart. Through purgatorial means he obtained his knowledge of the God who suffers because He loves His chosen ones, and who will not cease to love them while hope remains that they may yet love Him.

CHAPTER VI

ISAIAH

THE Northern Kingdom with which the names of Elijah, Amos and Hosea were closely related lasted a little more than two hundred years. Its independence began after Solomon's death in 933 B.C. and ended in 722 B.C. when Sargon's Assyrian hosts conquered it. Henceforth Judah was Israel's heir and the prophetic office was exercised solely on Judaic soil. The greatest prophets of the Southern Kingdom were Jeremiah and Isaiah. The latter was the son of a prominent person named Amoz, whose family belonged to Jerusalem's aristocracy and probably was received at court. In any case the prophet seems to have had permission to enter the king's presence at will. He was distinguished from his forerunners of Samaria by his familiarity with influential social circles, his practical sagacity and his superior gifts as an orator. Elijah breathed vengeance on Jehovah's foes; Amos denounced Israel's iniquity; Hosea pleaded for her restoration; Isaiah endeavored by his eminent statesmanship to define more clearly her destiny as the divinely chosen nation.

His active career extended from 740 B.C. to 700 B.C. or even later. He lived through a series of acute crises in national and international affairs, and his firm maintenance of the religion of Jehovah earned him the title of "The Prophet of Faith." His ministry was aided by the location of the Temple at Jerusalem and the sacred traditions it enshrined. Baalism's idolatries were somewhat subdued in the shadow of that historic center of Israel's spiritual development. Religious and political conditions reflected the stabilizing influence of the capital city. Kings were not so liable to assassination. The perfidies of an oriental monarchy and the sensuality of a virulent paganism were checked by the general consciousness of God's requirements and of His guardian care. Although foreign invasions occurred they were not so frequent nor calamitous as those that had devastated the Northern Kingdom.

Nevertheless the prolonged struggle between the worshippers of Jehovah and those of Baal still persisted and Judah's princes were involved in it. It was recorded of King Jehoram that "he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot and led Judah astray." [1] His consort Athaliah reigned after the death of their son Ahaziah. She was the evil daughter of her pernicious mother Jezebel who, as we have already seen, was Elijah's enemy.

Athaliah displayed the cruelty of her breed by murder-

[1] 2 Chronicles 21:11.

ISAIAH

THE ANOINTED OF GOD

"Though your sins be as scarlet, They shall be as white as snow."
Isaiah 1:18.

"And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more."
Isaiah 2:4.

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory."
Isaiah 6:3.

"Here am I; send me."
Isaiah 6:8.

קדוש קדוש קדוש

ing her kinsfolk whom she suspected of opposition to her plottings. She also built a temple and dedicated it to Baal, erected altars and images in honor of that god, and appointed priesthoods to serve them. As against these profanations, we read how King Asa "removed all the idols that his fathers had made";[2] and that King Joash, who in his boyhood was mercifully saved from Athaliah's clutches, raised a public subscription for the restoration of Solomon's Temple.[3] Yet even this promising prince succumbed in his later life to the lures of Baalism.[4]

Evidently the religion of Moses was sorely beset in Isaiah's time. Its chief source of renewal proceeded from the somewhat obscure prophets who prepared his way. Shemaiah, Azariah, Hanani, Jahaziel and Eliezer were praised as servants of the Most High who felt His indwelling Presence and were gravely concerned for Israel's loyalty to her God and Deliverer.[5] The words of Hanani revealed the convictions of this group of heroic spirits. "The eyes of Jehovah," he said, "run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."[6] This sound teaching warded off Judah's dissolution for a century and a half during which she was spared the doom

[2] 1 Kings 15:12.
[3] 2 Kings 11:2-3; 12:4-15.
[4] 2 Chronicles 24:17-18.
[5] 1 Kings 12:22; 2 Chronicles 15:1; 2 Chronicles 16:7; 2 Chronicles 20:14; 2 Chronicles 20:37.
[6] 2 Chronicles 16:9.

that had fallen on the Northern Kingdom. If her golden candlestick was not then removed from before Jehovah's Throne it was because His Will was proclaimed with some freedom and effect in Jerusalem. Its proclamation culminated in Isaiah, to whom the religious world owes the noblest utterances contained in the first half of the book which bears his name.

He appeared none too soon for Judah's welfare. She weathered the approaching tempest, but her safety was largely due to the guidance of this inspired seer who made clear to his countrymen the purpose of Jehovah and the part they had to play in its fulfillment. He saw the downfall of the Northern Kingdom and how its iniquities had infected Judah. He witnessed King Ahaz's humiliating acceptance of Assyria's overlordship to protect his nation from a similar fate. Since that nation was now the only one possessing the precious deposit of Mosaic doctrine and law her preservation seemed essential for their transmission. At this juncture, when the question "To be or not to be" was uppermost, Isaiah's message burst forth like a thunderstorm from a sultry sky and beat down the pretensions and boastings of those who trusted in force alone for the nation's progress.

No event took place on earth, according to this prophet, which was not controlled by the Almighty One and did not have as its ultimate objective the well-being of His offspring. The human race lay in His hand as clay

in the hand of the potter. The dreaded Assyrians were no more than His instrument of chastisement, and life's bewildering maze of good and evil consistently subserved His aims. Yet while "the lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted," [7] those who eschewed the sins of pride and presumption and who submitted to Jehovah's guidance would be delivered from their enemies.

At this time Assyria had grown enormously in the East. She controlled Palestine and cast a covetous gaze on the Nile valley. Egypt needed Judah as a buffer state between herself and Assyria, and Assyria needed Judah as a bridge into Egypt. The little nation seemed at the mercy of these two empires and likely to be crushed between them. The familiar fable of the brass pots and the earthen one was illustrated by Judah's position, and her problem was how to avoid collision with either empire. King Hezekiah, the well-intentioned but irresolute prince who had succeeded his father Ahaz, endeavored to keep peace with both these great States and at the same time to introduce needed religious reforms. "He removed the high places and brake the pillars, and cut down the asherah" (or sacred pole). He also arranged for a national Passover to which he invited not only the Judaeans, but all the faithful Israelites who were left in the broken Kingdom of the

[7] Isaiah 2:11.

North. Unfortunately Hezekiah allowed himself to become entangled in foreign alliances. Merodach-Baladan, the efficient ruler of the now powerful nation of Babylon, promised Hezekiah his support. Encouraged by this monarch's overtures and by those of wily but enfeebled Egypt Hezekiah and his counselors decided to break with Assyria. It was a momentous decision. The Assyrian ruler Sennacherib was the son and successor of Sargon, whom he probably murdered in 705 B.C. An astute and capable monarch, he quickly detected the danger to his empire and resolved to strike first and strike hard.

Although Hezekiah's change of front was sustained by the people, Isaiah openly resisted it as a suicidal step. His protest was based upon a formative experience of his youth which determined his manhood's beliefs and deeds. In 740 B.C., the year of King Uzziah's death, Isaiah received his summons to the prophetic office in the form of a vision during which his awareness of Jehovah's majesty and holiness overwhelmed him. Young and impressionable as he then was, he felt he had glimpsed realities which could not be adequately expressed. His language indicated he had apprehended the very essence of the Being of Deity as differentiated from that of humanity. In his despair over his own uncleanness an angel touched his lips with a live coal from the altar, and assured him that by that act he was hallowed for his ministry and harmonized with God's exalted will. Then came a voice:

"Whom shall I send forth, and who will go for us?" To this call Isaiah responded: "Here am I; send me." He left the Temple to share with his own and future generations the significance of this regenerating contact with the Infinite and the All Holy. Few events in the inward life of preëminent personalities have surpassed Isaiah's vision in the qualities it evoked and the services it enabled him to render. By its light he discovered that beliefs hinging upon earthly witnesses worked under doubtful or defective conditions. Established upon the absolute confidence it created, his religion was never afterwards subjected to mundane policies nor dependent upon temporal alliances.

He realized that Jehovah demanded a people consecrated to His purpose and that as such they could not have intercourse with heathen nations. He knew what mischief Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser and Sargon had wrought in the North. He recalled the ignominy Assyria had inflicted on Hezekiah's father, Ahaz. Then he had opposed an alliance with Assyria. Now he opposed both a defiance of Assyria and an alliance with Egypt. His opposition was cogently argued from the viewpoints of religious fidelity and wise statesmanship. His appeal was summarized in the assertion, "We are Jehovah's people; in Jehovah alone let us trust."

With fervent and stately eloquence he informed Hezekiah that there was no hope for his kingdom save in the

living God: "For thus said the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." [8] The king spurned Isaiah's advice and entered a confederation of Palestinian and adjoining countries which was repeatedly defeated by Sennacherib's advancing army.

The Assyrian conqueror desolated Judah and levied ruinous tribute upon her. The crowning disaster came, however, when he demanded the surrender of Jerusalem itself. In the terror and confusion that followed, Isaiah again appeared in the picture. Though his warnings had been scorned, he wasted no time on useless reproaches, but at once heartened the fear-stricken Hezekiah and his subjects with strong words of assurance. "The king of Assyria . . . shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast up a mound against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." [9]

It was as Isaiah declared it should be. Rumors of the approach of an Egyptian army may have disquieted Sennacherib, and a sudden epidemic, probably the bubonic plague, decimated his forces. Perhaps both these deterrents occurred simultaneously. In any case he retreated

[8] Isaiah 30:15.
[9] Isaiah 37:33-35.

to Assyria leaving Jerusalem uninjured. In a far later time Byron's magnificent poem beginning "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold," celebrated this deliverance. Isaiah furnished the poet's theme in his doctrine that since Zion was God's fortress it was inviolable. But events were impending under Hezekiah's iniquitous son Manasseh which taught the prophet that Zion's continued existence must depend on a reformation that sprang from a nationwide and sincere repentance. Zion had to be conceived spiritually and not politically before her security could be assured: The city might perish but the Ideal it embodied was imperishable.

This doctrine enlarged Isaiah's prophetic boundaries on every side. Fixed in his belief that Jehovah's dominion was from everlasting to everlasting, he moved with freedom and power in the entire region of human existence. Past, present and future belonged to the Almighty. His enlightened servants could not be imposed upon by current events however tyrannical or perplexing. The prophet's second doctrine of "the faithful remnant" through whom Jehovah would further His designs, was a logical deduction from that monotheistic faith to which Isaiah gave additional scope and meaning. Such were the cardinal articles of a creed which solved his severest problems and answered questions that had not spared his peace. His unfaltering faith and spiritual sensibility gave him a monarchical place in the Divine vocation to which

he had been summoned by his vision in the Temple.

In him we may perceive the religious statesman who was not deluded by life's outward appearances, and for whom its historical processes were the manifestations of moral forces. Since Israel was God's possession He was bound to safeguard her. But being His, she was also bound to respond to His claims upon her. Because Isaiah knew these truths as no other living person knew them he sternly denounced his nation's sin and lawlessness. Yet, as in his first chapter, his denunciations were interpenetrated by a keen solicitude born of his sacrificial love for Jehovah's people. His message may be summarized in a few words: "Exercise faith, and you shall have security; be quiet, and you shall be strong." [10] Everything in the man and in his message was vitally related to his conception of the Eternal God. Was He not All Holy and Almighty? Therefore when His chosen ones were sanctified unto Him they would enjoy His protection. Their permanence derived from their purity. But whatever happened to Jerusalem or to Judaea as political and social units, nothing could destroy the living nexus between Jehovah and "the remnant." However sordid and corrupt the age might be agencies for its cleansing were always operative, though these were too far above merely transient affairs to be detected by superficial minds.

The "holy seed" bore fruit of itself and its fruit would

[10] Isaiah 7:4, 9.

remain. So sure was Isaiah of these factors that he named his son Shear-jashub, meaning "a remnant shall return," [11] and it would persist beyond the rise and fall of empires then prosperous and others yet unborn. In His own time and way Jehovah would usher in the new era when rulers should reign in righteousness, princes should sit in judgment, and the ideal State would furnish a democracy of opportunity governed by an aristocracy of character.[12]

"The day of the Lord" had already dawned for this dedicated thinker. His superb description of God's chosen Leader and of the blessings of his sovereignty, is one of the rarest passages of the Hebrew Scriptures. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this." [13]

The man who wrote these words was a masterly advocate for the dominance of the spiritual over the temporal

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[11] Isaiah 7:3.
[12] Isaiah 32:1-8.
[13] Isaiah 9:6-7.

and for the superiority of moralized thinking over brute impulse. He combined in a high degree the religious perceptiveness of the saint and the creative imagination of the prophet with the practical realism of the man of action. To have accomplished what he did against such tremendous odds was an achievement worthy of the greatest leaders of any age.

We hear nothing more of Isaiah after his dramatic intervention. He had fulfilled his mission and while Hezekiah lived the prophet received the nation's homage. Legend says that in his old age the renowned servant of Jehovah was sawn asunder by King Manasseh. But this may be a tradition due to that monarch's ruthless persecution.

CHAPTER VII

MICAH

MICAH the Morashthite was so designated because he hailed from the village of Moresheth-Gath situated in the fertile foothills of Judah near Philistia's frontier and about thirty miles south and east of Jerusalem. His fellow villagers were sufficiently distant from the capital to be lovers of the soil and sufficiently close to the frontier to be alert for its defense. Micah first appeared in 720-719 B.C. to renew Jehovah's controversy with rebellious Israel. Hezekiah reigned when the prophet ministered and Judah was still uninvaded, but the fall of the Northern Kingdom echoed in all Israel's ears. Amos had been silent for thirty years and Hosea for fifteen. The political and religious backgrounds of Micah were largely those of Isaiah, who was then in his mid-career and through whom God was to vouchsafe Jerusalem's preservation from Sennacherib's onslaught. Micah summoned Israel and the nations of the earth to hear Jehovah's arraignment of His people and the yet unexpected sentence of their punishment. The prophet's tenure was neither as prolonged nor

as famous as that of Isaiah. Some Biblical scholars insist that he was responsible only for chapters one to five in the book bearing his name, but these convey the gist of his message. It is probable that he wrote parts of chapters six and seven, the former of which contains the classic passage on "true religion" which has secured the reverent regard of Jew and Christian alike.

His attack on the transgressions of the people was made while he was in close contact with Jerusalem's crimes and panics, and a resident on the border which might have to bear the brunt of the invasion his nation's backslidings were inviting. Had not the woeful predictions of Amos and Hosea been fulfilled in Northern Israel? How then could Judah's injustice and iniquity escape Divine punishment? The floodtide of war which had submerged the North would soon overtake her. Such was the burden of the Lord resting on this plain man of the farmstead. If his ministry extended into Manasseh's reign it explains some pointed references to that worthless king in Micah's book. Even if these allusions were made later, they none the less belonged to the substance and teaching of the book.

Manasseh was "the Ahab of Judah," albeit with increased cunning and malignancy. The ephemeral religious reforms his father Hezekiah had instituted were swept away by this degenerate son. Baalism was restored, enthroned in Jerusalem and given priority in Judah's

rural regions. There had always been more or less revelry, superstition and sensuality in the nation's religious observances. Allusions to images, amulets, household gods, familiar spirits, diviners and soothsayers were quite frequent in Old Testament annals. The capital's priestly cult united with the prophetic school in opposing these evils but they were too deeply embedded to be easily removed. The modern mind can scarcely appreciate what such perversions meant to the spiritual primitives of Micah's age, nor how they governed their thinking, entered into all their relations, and generated the motives pulsating behind their traitorous behavior. Israel's repeated relapses into Baalism's debased rituals were measurably accounted for by their fascination for men and women who lived on a naturalistic level, and also by their strong attraction for Judah's princes and politicians.

Manasseh, as shrewd as he was unscrupulous in temporal affairs, met the heathen tendencies of his people more than halfway. He led the marked reaction against Mosaism which followed Isaiah's brief triumph, and catered to its dissolute proclivities. As we have already stated, the altars of Baal were rebuilt, its shrines in the high places were restored, and the Assyrian goddess Ishtar, the reputed queen of heaven, was given a place of special honor in the Temple at Jerusalem. There are suggestions in Micah that Isaiah was slain by Manasseh but whether these were later additions to the book is not

known. If the aged prophet was still alive he saw his beloved Judah reduced to the humiliating status of an Assyrian dependency. Nor was it astonishing that Manasseh should have determined to get rid of a servant whose presence was a reproach to his reign. Plainly Israel's prolonged conflict with Baalism was still vigorously waged and it had now passed into another and a darker phase.

Micah entered the struggle in three distinctive ways. He emphasized the corruption of the chosen race, announced its impending punishment and heralded the salvation of the faithful remnant. His treatment of these themes did not exhibit Isaiah's persuasive utterance but it ably supplemented that prophet's plea for Judah's spiritual welfare. The essential difference between the two prophets consisted in their social standing and outlook. Isaiah spoke and wrote from the viewpoint of a son of the city, well born and highly educated; whereas Micah spoke and wrote from that of a peasant farmer. Yet he too felt the throb and tumult of the capital which was but thirty miles away. He was indignant against Judah's large centers and leisured classes, impatient with their follies and crimes, and painfully aware of the social disturbance they created. He had seen Judah's swift decline under Ahaz. The invading army of Sennacherib must have passed near his door. Hezekiah's attempt to revive Jerusalem's prosperity had taxed the rural regions to the limit.

Such were some of the disasters which outraged Micah's toiling group and provoked his remonstrance.

He denounced the cheating of the poor by the rich and the crushing of the weak by the strong with a realistic intensity suggesting that he himself had been a victim of these practices. Read his burning words about the proud and the wealthy who "oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." [1] Or about judges who hated the good and loved the evil and who grew fat by the sale of justice, "who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skins from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." [2] He poured contempt on the corrupt rulers who "build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity"; and exposed the pseudo-seer's purchased platitudes and labored apologies for injustice, declaring "The priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money." [3] These hot protests of a self-respecting, God-fearing Israelite voiced the convictions of his fellow yeomen who were genuine lovers of their country and the economic backbone of the state. Micah's invectives were justified by the wrongs they endured. Their farms and homesteads were depleted by vicious misgovernment,

[1] Micah 2:2.
[2] Micah 3:2-3.
[3] Micah 3:9-11.

political favoritism, public extravagance, and by the robberies the city dwellers perpetrated on them.

The later oracles of the prophet's book were of a kindred character. Deceitful balances, the subornation of justice and the arrogant violence of plutocrats were excoriated. Self-seeking rulers and judges greedy of gain were common enough. "The best of them is as a brier; the most upright is worse than a thorn hedge." Then came the despairing warning, "Trust ye not in a neighbor; put ye not confidence in a friend; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom." [4] It is quite likely that this language expressed Micah's sentiments and echoed his earlier messages. But such cannot be said of chapters four and five. The familiar description of that halcyon time when nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks was probably borrowed from Isaiah.[5] The doctrine of the remnant so impressively set forth in the fifth chapter is likewise Isaianic and may be assigned to a disciple whom the statesman-prophet had trained to continue his mission.

Yet when what is uncertain has been subtracted from Micah's message enough is left for an adequate conception of the man, his time, and his teaching concerning God and religion. With Amos and Isaiah, Micah reverenced Jehovah as the all righteous and all holy Being to

[4] Micah 7:4-5.
[5] Micah 4:1-3; Cf. Isaiah 2:2-4.

whom only those deeds corresponding with His nature were acceptable. It was therefore impossible to please Him by mere cult routine to the accompaniment of dissolute conduct. Priests, princes and people alike made no attempt to relate His religion to their actual lives. Public disorder was consequently farreaching and obstinate, while rampant iniquities sheltered beneath futile ecclesiastical formulas. Ignorance, superstition and materialism were the feeders of the rank injustice on which Micah turned like a lion at bay. Even the offering of more strictly Hebrew sacrifices did not suffice. "Thousands of rams . . . or ten thousands of rivers of oil" were nothing more than pompous parades of externalism.[6] Their profuse ceremonialism had nothing to do with the morality of the nation except to enfeeble it. Nevertheless, deceiving and being deceived, the misguided people deemed this adoration acceptable to God. Micah portrays them as leaning upon Him and saying, "Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us." [7]

The prophet pricked these conceits, but was not content to oppose them negatively. He also stressed the decisive factor that since Israel wrongly conceived God she had a perverted conception of religion and its interpretation of life. She had split on the rock upon which she should have built. At this point occurs one of those pas-

[6] Micah 6:6.
[7] Micah 3:11.

sages which insure the Bible's supremacy as the Book of religion. "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" [8]

Judah had other divinely directed and valiant souls besides Micah. They may not have felt his spiritual enthusiasm in equal measure but they endeavored to preserve the legislation and teaching of Moses. Notwithstanding the constant inroads of Canaanite and Assyrian systems and saturnalias, these disciples of the great lawgiver transmitted the light received at Sinai. Their names are unknown, yet this should not prevent us from honoring them as unwavering supporters of the Mosaic Dispensation and benefactors of the race. As the distant foothills of the Himalayas sustain their loftiest peaks, so the continuous testimony of Israel's forgotten worthies sustained the religious altitude of her great prophets whose witness was ascensive. In Amos it towered toward Jehovah's eternal righteousness; in Hosea, toward His persistent love; in Isaiah, toward His absolute holiness and sovereignty; and Micah stressed God's profound concern

[8] Micah 6:6-8.

for "the poor in the land." No abstract virtues sufficed, however stainless, until they were applied to the abject conditions of human life. No palatial enlargement of Jerusalem was a defense for the conscienceless exploitation of Judah's rural laborers. No ostentatious ritual could substitute for integrity, honesty and kindly dealing between all ranks and conditions of men. No oblation to God, however costly, could lessen His anger against those who preyed upon the helpless and the destitute.

Israel's history proved that Micah was right. One hundred and fifteen years after Jerusalem's rescue from Sennacherib's hosts the farmer-prophet's predictions were verified. The proud city became a heap of ruins, the Temple a smoking pile, and the people were dragged into captivity. In Micah's book we may read the moral of the whole human story. He looked before and after, and told what would and would not be. His remonstrance was neither ancient nor modern but eternal. Whenever social compunction dies there dies the manhood of the nation. Whenever the creature misconstrues his Creator or attempts to measure Him by earthbound standards, moral and spiritual death ensues. And the last state is worse than the first.

CHAPTER VIII

ZEPHANIAH

ISRAEL's prophetic utterances were largely determined by the circumstances attending their deliverance. This was true to an unusual degree of Zephaniah's messages. He faced a rapidly changing world order moving toward a collapse in which he knew his nation must be involved. He viewed so alarming a prospect from the standpoint of "the faithful remnant," a company of devout souls whose hopes and fears he shared and who had endeavored to avert the approaching disaster. But he was not aware that their apparently useless efforts were about to achieve an unexpected and memorable religious triumph.

The reactionary Manasseh had been succeeded by his son Amon who was assassinated shortly after his accession. Amon's son and successor, Josiah, was but a boy when his father's death occurred. Nevertheless the strenuous exertions of his friends secured his ascent to the throne. From the opening days of his reign he encouraged "the faithful remnant" and about the year 625 B.C., when the

youthful monarch had barely attained his majority, he headed a crusade for Israel's deliverance from the idolatries which had so deeply corrupted her national life and character. After a long interval of silence, prophecy was heard again, and it seemed as though Judah was about to return to the wisdom of the fathers and the obedience of the just.

Here followed a decisive event in that return under Josiah. Modern Old Testament scholars have recognized in its earlier books two media of transmission known respectively as J., the Jehovistic, and E., the Elohistic documents, because their authors showed a marked preference for one or other of these two Divine names. J. represented for the most part the viewpoint of Judah, and E. that of the Northern Kingdom. J. is believed to have been compiled about 850 B.C. and E. about 750 B.C. Both documents were ultimately combined into one history, and it is important to remember that this was probably being done during Manasseh's turbulent reign. No prophet of distinction had illumined the night of heathenism ushered in by that king. Isaiah and Micah could not have known more than its gloomy beginning, and thereafter everything the king and his satellites could devise for the nation's religious undoing had been attempted. The pure worship of Jehovah was proscribed and harried while its heathen rivals were patronized and exalted. Notwithstanding these apparently insurmountable obstacles, the

"remnant" persisted and finally quickened the spiritual temper of the people.

Other religious movements were developing concurrently. The first of these took shape in the elaboration of the old ritual under a priestly order which centered in the Temple at Jerusalem.[1] The second movement seemed antagonistic to the first since it resulted in the production of what was known later as the Deuteronomic Code. For though this historic document contained ritualistic elements it also reflected the spirit of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. The year 650 B.C. is assigned as the date of the completion of the Code's compilation which places it in the middle period of Manasseh's reign. It is surprising, to say the least, that a work of such spiritual significance should even have been suggested during the tenure of so dissolute a monarch. The fact that it was actually finished affords evidence that, as in Elijah's earlier period, there were yet loyal men in Israel who had not "bowed the knee to Baal."

Such, in brief, were some of the conditions under which Zephaniah exercised his ministry, and if, as the first verse of his book seems to say, he was King Hezekiah's great-great-grandson, he could scarcely have been out of his teens when he entered upon it. Undoubtedly he was one of the number who formed what was virtually a youth movement. Josiah began to reign about 638 B.C., the year

[1] 2 Chronicles, 30:1-9

in which Jeremiah referred to himself as a mere boy, and Zephaniah was not much more.

But behind the characteristic fervor of these youthful patriots was a large reserve of the patience of hope and the labor of love, due to the fidelity of preceding members of the "remnant." Josiah and his associates also had material resources at their disposal, otherwise the young king could not have undertaken a renovation of the Temple at Jerusalem. During its progress a document was discovered in the archives of the Temple by the priest Hilkiah who at once brought it to the king's attention. It proved to be a Book of the Law the reading of which greatly agitated Josiah. His agitation was intensified by a message from the prophetess Huldah who declared that catastrophe threatened Israel for her neglect of Jehovah's commandments.[2] The king promptly instituted revolutionary reforms in harmony with the Law so providentially recovered. The reforms demonstrated that the hitherto unknown document was the Deuteronomic Code. Thus "out of the eater came forth food, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." [3] The Code which Josiah employed to good purpose had been compiled while Manasseh was flinging the nation's substance and honor into the lap of Assyria's Delilah of lustful idolatry. As a result of its publication Baalism was repudiated

[2] 2 Chronicles 34:14ff.
[3] Judges 14:14.

throughout the land, its shrines and symbols were blotted out, and Israel's purification was commemorated by a solemn national Passover.

These healthy changes richly rewarded Zephaniah's prophetic ministry. For years before the Reformation they signalized, his messages had prepared the way of the Lord in Judah. Meanwhile he was himself prepared for his mission. In an age when names were bestowed primarily for their religious significance, his forbears for four generations with one exception were called after Jehovah. These tokens of his godly ancestry were evidenced in his personal character. Born of parents who were steadfast adherents of Mosaism, and probably as the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah also of royal blood, Zephaniah lived in and loved Jerusalem, where he stood alone in the prophetic succession. Nahum appeared ten years after the Reformation, and Jeremiah, who was then on the threshold of his ministry, had no prominent part in it.

What then did Zephaniah have to say? And why was he so pessimistic about the immediate future? Some commentators have wondered that one so young should have been so hopeless. Yet despair respects neither young nor old. When youth's susceptible heart is wounded it bleeds freely. The sorrows and betrayals of earlier days linger long after reason and experience bid them be gone. What this young man believed he wholly and consum-

ingly believed! Depressed by the evils he denounced and as yet unversed by life's later wisdom in the fortitude of faith, it was natural that Zephaniah should behave as the herald of a Divine judgment close at hand and approaching "faster than a warrior." Half measures were impotent, hence his emphasis upon the world's punishment as essential to Jehovah's purpose. Its malignant diseases had to be burned out by the resistless blaze of Heaven's wrath. Since Judah had sinned against light and knowledge she could not escape the inevitable penalty. Did not the young prophet recall the infamies of Manasseh and Amon, and the injustice and cruelty, waste and ruin which had prevailed until the accession of Josiah? He abhorred the Reformation's humiliating antecedents with the unrestraint of flaming youth and unhesitatingly revealed the agonies he felt, scornful of consequences.

It should be said that the mere finding of the Deuteronomic Code could not have created the subsequent changes under Josiah. Its cordial reception disclosed a renewed Israel, more reverent in Jehovah's presence and more obedient to His Will. The puritanical champions of His worship obtained an ardent voice in Zephaniah as their mouthpiece to the manner born. He would neither retract nor retreat and he would be heard. Although one leading motive ran through his message, there were in it abrupt transitions representing various sections of the reformers and their different opinions. The

men and means to be employed for Jehovah's punishment of the nation were not as dramatic as those of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk. Zephaniah mediated, as it were, between two worlds, the one dying, the other struggling to be born. Notwithstanding this attitude, he was consistent in his descriptions of Israel's utter estrangement from God and her exposure to deadly peril.

He clearly foresaw the first instrumentality for her chastisement in the founding of the Chaldean or Babylonian empire by Nabopolassar, whose political and military prowess threatened that of Assyria. This danger was realized in 612 B.C. by the fall of Nineveh and the dissolution of the Assyrian empire. Babylon henceforth became Judah's formidable foe and furnished the historic background for Jeremiah's dramatic career. Zephaniah's second instrument of the oncoming destruction may be called ethnological. It had to do with one of those migrations which ever and anon have diverted the stream of history. Little is known of the Scythian invasion except that about the time in question the wild tribes of the steppes beyond the Caucasus overflowed in southern and western directions, and about 626 B.C. ravaged the territories they traversed with terrorism and death. These hordes of daring horsemen advanced rapidly toward the Mediterranean coast, disorganized powerful states, and struck terror into half a continent. Within three years they overwhelmed Western Asia and were its scourge

from 626 to 600 B.C. Assyria's impending destruction under the Babylonian onslaught was hastened by the cruel Centaurs whose conquest of Egypt was only avoided by her craven offers of a bribe.

Zephaniah may have witnessed the headlong drive of the resistless nomads when they crossed Judaea. Certainly he regarded them as the weapon of God and believed that their devastations would become worldwide. Indeed, their strange emergence out of unknown regions indicated that "the day of Jehovah" had dawned. This phrase had been used by Isaiah, and it was familiar to the Israelites who expressed by it their assurance that the God of their fathers would yet deliver His people in an unprecedented way. But Zephaniah followed Amos in giving it an apocalyptic meaning of profound pessimism which has since clung to it. It implied then, as it does for many Christians now, that nothing short of a phenomenal manifestation of Divine vengeance could exterminate mankind's congenital iniquities. Nor was the prophet hopeful of any permanent improvement to follow. There are optimistic passages in his book but these are now regarded as later additions. Although he stressed the doctrine of "the faithful remnant," the best he could say for it was that it would consist of "an afflicted and poor people" who would be compelled to take refuge in the name of Jehovah.

The most characteristic passage of his utterances is con-

tained in the first chapter. It rings like a tocsin sounding a midnight alarm in some rich city oblivious to the enemy's approach. "The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of Jehovah." [4] It requires no stretch of imagination to believe the prophet wrote these words while the thunderings of the Scythian cavalry and the pealing of their clarions still lingered in his ears. He spoke of the dismay their invasion everywhere produced: "The mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements." [5]

He depicted God as giving the reason for all this woe that fell upon the nations: "And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Jehovah; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy." [6]

In a word, the prophet's viewpoint was that of utter skepticism concerning Judah in particular and the human

[4] Zephaniah 1:14.
[5] Zephaniah 1:14-16.
[6] Zephaniah 1:17-18.

race in general. Degeneracy beyond redemption was the tragedy of the world. Nevertheless, he did not surrender his beloved "remnant" to the universal holocaust. Its members would remain "humble and poor folk," deprived of temporalities but having enough virility to carry on God's purposes in a shorn and mutilated earth.

Such is the simple and harsh message of Zephaniah, too near to destructive judgment and too final in its determination, too far from the grace and mercy of a really religious interpretation. It indicated that lack of faith in life's ordinary processes and historical developments which is frequently shown by sincere souls in periods of spiritual depravity or of temporal suffering. Despairing of his fellow men, Zephaniah invoked Jehovah's vengeance on them as His disobedient creatures. He did not seem to realize that through these same creatures God would yet achieve His purposes. The prophet could not share the confidence of the Psalmist that even the wickedness of men was compelled to serve those purposes.[7] Nothing remained, therefore, except to separate the few sheep from the countless goats and let death's curtain fall on the woeful scene. Yet Zephaniah's denunciations should not be regarded as too rudimentary for consideration by those who cultivate an irrational buoyancy despite their sinfulness. The presumption of men and nations that they can enjoy a gilded present of selfish luxury and ma-

[7] Psalm 76:10.

terial affluence, while at the same time their better future is forever assured, needs the chilly repression of Zephaniah's desperately earnest prohibitions. His sobering insistence that morning by morning Jehovah brings His justice to light has its meaning for our age as it had for that of the prophet.[8]

[8] Zephaniah 3:5.

CHAPTER IX

JEREMIAH

When the Northern Kingdom was on the verge of dissolution its noblest prophet appeared in Hosea, the herald of Jehovah's everlasting mercy. Likewise during the period preceding Judah's downfall its spiritual life was dominated by Jeremiah, the last and greatest of Israel's preëxilic seers. His life covered the decisive era during which the Hebrew religion, under the impetus of King Josiah's Reformation, eagerly appropriated nationalism and legalism. It was not the least of Jeremiah's numerous merits that he saw how their hardening tendencies threatened the inward freedom of the chosen people, and his emphasis on the moral and religious requirements of the Mosaic faith preserved its vital elements.

He was born about 650 B.C., and belonged to the priestly family of Anathoth, a village of Benjamin situated north of Jerusalem. His father Hilkiah may have been a descendant of the house of Abiathar, King David's priest and the last survivor of Shiloh's ancient hierarchy. But as the premier prophet of his people Jeremiah was

unhampered by the prejudices of any ecclesiastical order. Trained by Hilkiah in the loftiest traditions of Israel's ancestral faith and influenced by the refined and elevating ministry of Hosea, he received his vocational call in 626 B.C., the year of the death of Ashurbanipal, the last of Assyria's famous monarchs. The barbarians from the North known to the Greeks as Scythians and to the Babylonians as Umman-Manda were then ravaging Western Asia. Jeremiah must have witnessed the inroads of these hordes and also the overthrow of Assyria, followed by Egypt's ruinous defeat at Carchemish in 605 B.C. Meanwhile startling events occurred in his own country, including the assassination of one king and the religious reforms instituted by another. Judah also became a vassal state first to Egypt and later to Babylon. Finally, her kingdom perished in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was captured and Solomon's Temple destroyed.

The prophet's ministry began shortly before Josiah's Reformation and continued through the reigns of his four successors Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. His conscience was too closely affiliated with Jehovah's law to consent to the ritualistic practices and political exigencies of the age. On the contrary, he stoutly opposed these four princes and their plans and openly rebuked their advisers. After contemptuously rejecting his counsels they were compelled to watch the fulfillment of his predictions when Nebuchadrezzar's sol-

diers captured the city Jeremiah loved and sought to save. But before this calamity fell on Judah he had preserved for the world the neglected truth that no nation could solely rely on the political state for the maintenance of its true life and mission. It was the soul of Israel which survived the crash of kingdoms and empires to become the fortress of Jehovah's Will.

Lovers of great poetry know the words of Milton who in 1642 referred to his yet unwritten epic as "the work . . . not of the vapour of wine . . . or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite;" but obtained "by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge and sends out His seraphim with the hallow'd fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases." In thus describing the sources of his own afflatus, the noblest of Puritans also described those of Jeremiah. The prophet's writings reveal a singularly sensitive and lofty spirit with the strongest claims on our sympathy and reverence. Temperamentally diffident, modest and sensitive, with a warm appreciation for the realms of nature and of humanity, he must have longed for the domestic peace and linked pieties which were never to be his.

From the moment of his Divine mandate he was launched on a tempestuous career to which duty rather than inclination impelled him. He knew that Jehovah had commissioned him to be a messenger of woe to

the Israel of his tenderest concern. Yet while no man could have shrunk more strongly from the unwelcome task, no man could have executed it with more fidelity. There was an impressive resemblance between him and his predecessor Hosea. Both were notable for intense emotion, for mental and moral transcendency and for unusual magnanimity. They had the same elegiac bent, the same ethereal path, the same absorbingly reverent approach to the Eternal, the same preponderance of the spiritualities in their utterances. Both stood in the highest rank of their nation's teachers and guides, because they perceived the vital religious values existing beneath their changing forms.

We know more concerning Jeremiah's life and fortunes than those of any other prophet of his order. His discourses manifested a thorough acquaintance with Hebrew history and the prominent individuals who epitomized it. No other prophet was so conversant with Israel's literature. Everything in it contributed to his calling. The benefits of his God-fearing forefathers and early discipline were apparent in his book. Had not Jehovah said to him, "Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; I have appointed thee a prophet unto the nations"?[1] This prenatal ordination vanquished his youthful hesitancy to obey the Lord's summons. Henceforth he was a predestined soul chosen

[1] Jeremiah 1:5.

to tread a hazardous road and to be derided by his countrymen. Nevertheless he persisted in the ambassadorship so cruelly misunderstood and ending in exile, perhaps even in martyrdom.

"There is in my heart as it were a burning fire, shut up in my bones," he cried, "and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain." [2] His resolution brought a nation's hate upon the selfless patriot who saw its follies and crimes in the searching light of an untainted affection. He knew that the people over whose interests he hovered with maternal anxiety were pursuing courses which must surely end in destruction. His sympathies as a devoted Hebrew could not avoid colliding with his obligations as God's anointed seer. Notwithstanding, he renounced much the world reckons precious and plowed his stubborn furrow to the end in solitary and tragic sacrifice.

Jeremiah's first prophetic outbursts were mainly concerned with the flagrant social sins so soon to be punished. Their penalty, he averred, would come "from the north country," an unmistakable reference to the Scythian invasion that had been anticipated by Zephaniah. Jeremiah's description of the freebooters of the Asiatic steppes was a masterpiece of realistic imagination. "They lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea, and they

[2] Jeremiah 20:9.

ride upon horses, every one set in array, as a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Zion." [3] The grave responsibility of the young prophet rested heavily upon him. He referred to himself as but a boy; his doubts and fears tormented him. While his friends deserted him and his foes increased he wrote, "I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter." [4] Though not openly related to Josiah's Reformation, at first he seems to have favored it, but later to have withdrawn his support on the substantial ground that nothing religiously effective had been achieved by the centralization of the national Faith at Jerusalem. The pagan heart of the people had not been changed by conventional ceremonies and lifeless rites. Israel's crying need was neither rigid legalisms nor ornate oblations, but that probing and purifying of her inmost self which no externalisms could achieve.

After Josiah's assassination by the Egyptians at Megiddo in 608 B.C. the stormy developments in Judah moved rapidly toward their disastrous finish. Pharaoh Necho awarded the vacant throne to his creature Jehoiakim. But as we have seen, in 605 B.C. Necho himself was overthrown at the battle of Carchemish which obliterated his dream of world empire. Judah then became tributary to Babylon under Nabopolasser and Nebuchadrezzar. Jehoiakim's acceptance of their lordship brought

[3] Jeremiah 6:23.
[4] Jeremiah 11:19.

with it the gross worship of Astoreth or the Babylonian "queen of heaven." The "asherahs" and "pillars" of obscene implication reappeared and the land was again polluted by their cults. Jeremiah vehemently antagonized this wickedness at every turn and predicted that the impious Jehoiakim should "be buried with the burial of an ass drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." [5] Priests, parasites, hangers-on at the court, feeders at the public crib and the people at large hated the prophet's forcible language. He was chiefly listed against the king as the author of the nation's apostasy and to him he addressed penetrating words which must have shocked the royal ears accustomed to obsequious flattery. "Thine eyes and thy heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for shedding innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it." [6] He bore down on his countrymen with equal boldness, accusing them of "building high places to Baal" and "pouring out drink-offerings unto other gods."

His enemies thrust him into the stocks to be mocked and vilified by the mob. Upon his release he went to the Temple where the people had assembled for prayer because they dreaded the chastisement of the Egyptians. Jeremiah confronted them with their need of repentance and amendment. "Will ye steal, murder and commit

[5] Jeremiah 22:19.
[6] Jeremiah 22:17.

adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say We are delivered to do all these abominations?" [7]

The leaders present threatened him with death. He replied in substance: "God hath sent me to preach to you. Change your ways, and He will bless you. Continue in evil and He will punish you. As for me, kill me if you will; I am in your hands." All courage is relative, a fact which can be conceded without disparagement of the virtue. Ordinary individuals cheerfully undertake risks in their daily work which would restrain the most stout-hearted who are unfamiliar with such hazards. But courage is seldom more admirable than in those who, though naturally timid and retiring, are nevertheless so impelled by the urgency of a supreme cause as to be indifferent to their personal hazards.

This courage was Jeremiah's outstanding trait and he displayed it to the full in defining and energizing the immutable difference between true and false religion. For a time the people respected his position and demanded his freedom. But he persisted in his denunciation of their laxity in morals and unreservedly maintained the absolute holiness and righteous claims of

[7] Jeremiah 7:8-10.

Jehovah. So perfectly did Jeremiah feel himself one with the God of his life that he represented Him as saying to him, "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." [8] Jehovah's foes were so completely his own that in one of the strongest passages of his book this otherwise benign and sympathetic man caused an overrank and putrescent state to drink the cup of Divine fury. "Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter." [9] These were strange words from the gentlest and most merciful of all the prophets. Yet that he might transmit the whole counsel of God he crucified his natural instincts, denied himself the joys of married life, united himself to Israel's spiritual ordination, and forfeited her confidence and support by his determination to maintain it.

Despised and rejected by men he clung the more tenaciously to Jehovah and His Will. He was sustained by that fellowship with Heaven which made his inward resistance superior to every outward pressure. When he broke out in imprecations against the day of his birth, God answered him, "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou

[8] Jeremiah 1:10.
[9] Jeremiah 12:3.

take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." [10] These human touches which show how strenuously Jeremiah contended for his personal integrity, endear him the more to those who have known his hidden wrestlings and afflictions. He prophesied to deaf ears and hardened hearts which returned him folly for his wisdom and insults for his affection. Like Cassandra in the ancient drama he was bound to denounce the Judah he loved because of the sin he hated.

In the critical year 605 B.C. he received God's command to write his words in a book. Warned by the menacing growth of the Chaldean power King Jehoiakim convened a national fast, and Jeremiah took advantage of the occasion to have his young friend and pupil Baruch read the volume aloud to the people assembled there. Hearing of the book the king ordered it read to him, whereupon in his rage against its contents he destroyed it. Jeremiah and Baruch managed to escape arrest and the prophet rewrote his message, adding to it "many like words" the nature of which may easily be imagined.[11]

Incited by Egypt Jehoiakim attempted to rebel against Nebuchadrezzar, but his death ended the incipient revolt. He was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) who was compelled to surrender unconditionally to the Babylonians. Determined to take no more chances Nebuchad-

[10] Jeremiah 15:19.
[11] Jeremiah 36:1ff.

rezzar captured the new monarch, took him to Babylon together with ten thousand of Israel's aristocracy, and there kept them in close confinement. None remained in Judah but leaderless and despondent groups. Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah, a youth of twenty-one and the third son of Josiah, was appointed by the Babylonian monarch as his viceroy to reign over a decimated Israel. Thus began in 597 B.C. what was known as "the first captivity."

Jeremiah anticipated Zedekiah's fate. After several years of hesitation this king yielded to Egyptian intrigues, accelerated by the incitements of his greedy nobles, and entered into a conspiracy with them against Babylon. Representatives of the smaller nations joined what was apparently a powerful movement for concerted action. But Jeremiah appeared among its adherents with a yoke upon his neck as the symbol of his conviction that it was God's Will they should submit to Babylon's dominion lest a worse evil befall them. Hananiah, a sycophantic spokesman for the court, threw the yoke off the prophet's neck and broke it, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon within two full years from off the neck of all the nations." Whereupon Jeremiah replied, "Thou hast broken the bars of wood; but thou hast made in their stead bars of iron." [12]

His position was akin to that previously taken by

[12] Jeremiah 28:10-13

Isaiah. There was a Moral Order which overruled treacherous and flimsy political experiments, and from which no nation could escape. Its law of righteousness governed empires of earth because it proceeded from the dominion of heaven. Jeremiah transmitted that law to his countrymen as he had received it, with the constancy of one whose spirit dwelt in the audience chamber of the Eternal. But he appealed in vain to secularized leaders who spurned his assertion that the Babylonian tyrant was only an unconscious agent for Jehovah's purposes. They flinched from the prophet's argument that Judah should submit to the Lord's inevitable judgment, since by so doing she would be illumined and strengthened by a spiritual experience essential for her Divine objectives. "We must bear the yoke that has been laid upon us," he urged, for "in His good time God will remove it." Once more the people were impressed by Jeremiah's superior perception, and rulers' plottings against Babylon subsided for want of the popular support. He also wrote to the discontented exiles in Babylon imploring them to abandon the idea of a speedy release and to remember that their ancestral Faith was independent of time, place and circumstances.[13]

This sublimated doctrine was too far removed from the fond delusions of superpatriotic partisans for their acceptance and ultimately they induced King Zedekiah to en-

[13] Cf. Jeremiah 29:1ff.

ter a confederacy against Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar took the field again, determined to end these repeated uprisings. The nation was terror stricken by his army's rapid advance to the neighborhood of Jerusalem. Jeremiah reiterated his message that Israel could find safety only in submission, whereupon he was charged with treason and again flung into prison. Zedekiah had pity on the prophet's hardships and transferred him to a guardhouse. Meanwhile, as the Babylonians marched toward the city Jeremiah fortified his position by publicly buying property outside the walls and announcing that fields and vineyards should yet be purchased in the land.

The king in his distress again sought the imprisoned prophet's advice, only to hear that subjection to Babylon would result in Israel's present and future good as Jehovah's instrument. But Zedekiah's decision to submit came too late. After being defended with the courage of despair, Jerusalem was captured and laid waste in 586 B.C. and the kingdom of Judah perished with its capital. Zedekiah's children were murdered before his eyes, after which he was blinded and carried to Babylon together with the wealthy and cultured Judaeans who, stripped and beggared, went with him into exile. Jeremiah survived the grim scenes of the ruined city's siege and capture, remained for a time with its poor and maimed residents who were left behind, and helped to repair their ravaged homes. But a band of panic-driven fugitives who

decided to migrate from their miseries into Egypt compelled the prophet to accompany them there. The last word heard from him was one of remonstrance because even in Egypt his countrymen reverted to the worship of the pagan "queen of heaven." According to a generally received tradition these idolaters assassinated the prophet since only in that way could he be silenced.

His body was buried in the sands of the land where his ancestors had once been slaves. But his name lives forever, and his amazing ministry, so interfused with the triumphs and tragedies which plumb human life to its depths, has placed him among the immortals. Doubtless he hailed with relief the rest and peace denied him while in the flesh. The nation for which he wrought with a breaking heart had compelled him to drink sorrow's cup to its dregs. Yet by so doing it unwittingly gave him leadership in Israel and in the Christian Church. He became the prophet of intrinsic religion; the saint who incarnated the marrow of his teaching in his personality; a prototype of "the Word made flesh." His sanctity emerged from two sources. The first was the stream of Mosaic Theism in which his spirit was baptized. The second was the drastic need of the social environment which fostered his fidelity to God. He believed in Him as the Moral Sovereign of the Universe, holy, just and righteous altogether—a belief having infinite implications for Israel and for the human race. In its behalf he over-

came his natural timidity and became as a wall of iron and a pillar of brass. If for Isaiah God was "high and lifted up" far above the thoughts and ways of men, for Jeremiah He was the immanent God "nigh at hand and not afar off," the indwelling Deity, the intimate and changeless Friend. To Jehovah the prophet could freely confess even his occasional doubts of His good faith, and still remain in unbroken fellowship with Him.

If Jeremiah did not blench before princes, priests and people, the fortitude he exhibited was derived from God's unfailing strength. If because of gigantic difficulties, he was at times overshadowed by distrust even of God, he regained his faith despite every hindrance. Because of the fullness of his Divine fellowship he perceived that sin's offense consisted, not in the violation of legal or priestly codes, but in those willful acts of disobedience which separated man from his Maker. The creature's transgression and his holiness were alike "of the inner life," they sprang from "the hidden man of the heart." Therefore it followed that righteousness was much more than the ritual which had become an empty routine of officialism. His dearly bought experiences were summarized in the most profound and authoritative utterance of Old Testament prophecy, known to Jews and Christians alike as The New Covenant: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of

Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." [14] Sublimer strains than these were not heard again in the religious world until Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of inwardness and power.

Eighteen centuries after Jeremiah's prediction, Dante, a kindred spirit, described in his Purgatorio the soul's progress heavenward. What the Italian poet wrote can be appropriately applied to Jeremiah's personality and mission as Judaism's greatest prophet. After surmounting the three symbolic steps—the white marble of sincerity and self-knowledge, the rough fissured block of self-denial and self-discipline, the red and glowing porphyry of loving self-devotion—the redeemed pilgrim ascends the Mount of Purification toward the liberty of Paradise and the Beatific Vision. There at last his guide tells him he is safe and free, because the Will of God has been his sole delight.[15] And there Jeremiah lives and reigns today.

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[14] Jeremiah 31:31-34.

[15] Cf. W. T. Davison "The Christian Conscience," p. 248.

CHAPTER X

NAHUM

THE primary conceptions and aims of the Deuteronomic Code were prophetic and reformative. It summoned Israel to its charge as a holy nation governed by Jehovah and manifesting its loyalty to Him in intelligent adoration and social justice. It also safeguarded these qualities against the secularization which had opposed them. Yet while the Code strengthened the bond between the Lord and His chosen people, it weakened the bond between Him and the rest of mankind, a result which though unintentional was none the less injurious. The Code's edict that Zion was Jehovah's sole earthly dwelling place, that only at Jerusalem could He be rightfully honored, and that all other sanctuaries of Israel must be destroyed, centralized the administration and practice of the national faith but it also conduced to its restriction. By their efforts to protect the teaching of Moses from the flagrant abuses of local shrines and cultisms, its advocates diminished adherence thereto in the country at large. As a consequence the Israelites were compelled to

regard all other sources of spiritual culture as forbidden and religion itself as something apart from their daily life. The Hebraism formerly taught and accepted became an isolated and institutional Faith with its retinue of permanent officials and their static methods.

A further result was the establishment of a rigorously exclusive priesthood jealous of its prerogatives whose members had to be of the tribe of Levi. They displaced the older domestic usage which made parents priests in their own households and the father of every home Jehovah's representative. Here began that cleavage between the clergy and the laity which has proved so prolific of mixed results, and the costly controversy between Church and State which is still undecided. The doctrine of a perfectly inspired and infallible Book to be literally construed, likewise had its genesis in Josiah's Reformation. In truth, the year 621 B.C. was an *annus mirabilis* not only for Judaism but for subsequent Christianity and Islam. It introduced a hard and fast ecclesiasticism into the somewhat easygoing and democratic religion of these ancient Hebrews, and interpreted it by statutes rather than by experience. The outcome was a systematic consecration of externalisms as the touchstone of personal character and of its acceptability to Jehovah. The movement to educate Israel's spirit through the senses ended by coarsening her spirit. The legalistic attempt to realize prophetic ideals by ritualistic means

produced a compromise between the prophet and the priest which hastened the prophet's abdication in favor of the priest.

Nahum was the first of the prophetic succession to manifest the clamorous nationalism engendered by this concentration of authority and the political ascendency it nurtured. The prophets who preceded him were Israelites indeed in their conviction that Jehovah had a special regard for the Hebrew race, but they also voiced the balancing truth that His regard was for a universally benevolent purpose.

Nahum however hailed the approaching fall of Nineveh with a burst of triumphant song in which his reckless patriotism found vent without any consideration for its moral qualifications. To be sure, he held that blood-stained and guilty states were liable to punishment. But he nowhere suggested that Israel came under that Divine ruling. Quite otherwise, whatever her transgressions were, she still remained a commonalty of "kings and priests unto God," and as such the object of His constant care. "We are His people" said this preacher who had eyes for little save the faults of foreign oppressors and who was too ardent in his hate to be a trustworthy exponent of the Divine Mind concerning mankind. Who then was Nahum? He was a native of Elkosh, a hamlet in the vicinity of Eleutheropolis belonging to the former domain of Simeon. When he ministered, between 614-612

B.C., the tentacles of destruction were tightening around Nineveh. The prophet mirrored the prospect in swift, brilliant and vivid speech, animated by his detestation of that city and without much trace of genuinely religious feeling. In truth his antagonisms were as broad as his affections were narrow. According to his view since Judah belonged to God therefore God belonged exclusively to Judah. The infallible Book of the Law had thus come near to evolving an infallible nation. Its foes were Jehovah's foes, its friends also His; whom Israel loved Jehovah loved and whom she hated He hated. This identification of the Lord of the human world with specified groups and cults has endured for twenty-seven centuries and its present embodiments in hypernationalism and sacerdotal extravagancies constitute a standing obstacle to the extension of God's kingdom.

It should be understood that Nahum did not indulge in vague generalizations. He was nothing if not sincere, definite, straightforward, unmistakable, but he suffered from arrested development of soul due to emotional prejudices. His denunciation bore directly upon Nineveh, the proud and apparently invincible capital of Assyria's empire. He was obsessed with the desire for its humiliation and the virulence of his song of hate against it has seldom been equaled in the annals of literature. Any inquiry concerning his alienation from the ethical teaching of his predecessors is best answered by a review

of the problems he could not solve. As in Zephaniah's time so in Nahum's who came only twelve years later, Assyria was still the ruling Power of Western Asia. Its celebrated metropolis Nineveh was surrounded by immense walls a hundred feet high and fifty feet thick, pierced by fifteen huge gates, and enclosing an irregular space about three miles long and one mile broad at the north. Within the city were magnificent residences and parks, and gardens irrigated by skillfully constructed aqueducts which conveyed water from the river Khoser. Its stupendous strength and fabulous wealth, together with the splendor of its fortresses and palaces, made Nineveh one of the marvels of its own and future ages.

So mighty an empire with such an impressive capital was bound to excite the jealousy and dread of adjacent nations. The Babylonians under their able king Nabopolasser, and the Medes under Cyaxares, united against Assyria and captured Nineveh in 612 B.C. The Assyrians thereupon moved their capital to Harran which also fell in 610 B.C. The Egyptians under Pharaoh Necho, who had supported Assyria in a bitter struggle for imperial supremacy, were next vanquished at Carchemish by the Babylonians in 605 B.C., after which the victorious nation assumed dominion.

The campaign was followed with great anxiety at Jerusalem where Josiah and his familiars were by no means agreed upon the course to adopt. One faction ad-

vised keeping Israel's compact with Assyria; another, including the king, favored an alliance with Babylon in the hope that Assyria's subjection might result in Israel's independence. Pharaoh Necho suspected Josiah of pro-Babylonian sympathies, delayed his march to aid Assyria and put the Jewish monarch to death at Megiddo in 608 B.C. This disaster occurred after Nahum's prophecies had been delivered.

The eleventh verse of the first chapter of his writings may have been a veiled attack upon Jeremiah who asserted that Judah's political integrity was not essential for Jehovah's irrevocable design. He was flatly contradicted by Nahum whose militant provincialism obscured his prophetic vision. He expressed his beliefs with a fanatical exultation over the catastrophe which he insisted was about to destroy Nineveh. Although the original sequence of his writings seems to have been seriously disarranged and the ideas of other authors interpolated in them, Nahum's rancorous patriotism prevails throughout the book that bears his name.

> *"Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth;*
> *Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath;*
> *Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries,*
> *And he reserveth wrath for his enemies."* [1]

These opening lines may have been a quotation from

[1] Nahum 1:2.

an older poem but they served as Nahum's text, with emphatic application to Nineveh. He believed its ruin would be achieved in supernatural ways by the God before whom the mountains quake and the hills melt for fear. "His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him." [2] Although these passages harmonized with Nahum's erroneous avowal that Jehovah would defend Israel against her enemies, his ultimate reliance seemed to be upon Babylon rather than upon the Lord. In any event it was by means of the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians that the Divine wrath was to annihilate Assyria and Nineveh. He rejoiced over the news brought by a messenger that Assyria had suffered defeat, and exclaimed in words transformed by later usage, "Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." [3] He depicted in sensational terms the capture of Nineveh which he held was imminent. Rapacious horsemen raced against its towering fortifications, broke down its gates and entered the city. "The chariots rage in the streets; they rush to and fro in the broad ways; the appearance of them is like torches; they run like the lightnings." [4] Its great palace was destroyed, its maidens mourned, its vast treasures were taken away. The city which had been like a den where the lion kept

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[2] Nahum 1:6.
[3] Nahum 1:15.
[4] Nahum 2:4.

his lioness and her whelps and had ravaged territories far and near—this city, cried Nahum, was "empty and void, and waste."

His hate was not appeased by a vision of devastation beyond the edge of doom. Although he had sung of Nineveh's fall under the figure of a disrupted den of lions, he went on to sing of it under the repellent figure of a harlot paying the price of her sins and exposed to public obloquy. He began as in the former instance with a few striking sentences telling of the manner of the forthcoming attacks on the city. "The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels, and prancing horses, and bounding chariots, the horseman mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering spear, and a multitude of slain, and a great heap of corpses, and there is no end of the bodies." [5] At last the city was stripped naked and resembled a prostitute disrobed in the market place so that passers-by might bespatter her with their filth of mouth and hand. "Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" [6] Fifty years before, about 666 B.C. Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria, had gone down into Egypt and destroyed Thebes. What had been done to that city was presently to be done to the pride and glory of Nineveh. "All thy fortresses shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be

[5] Nahum 3:2-3.
[6] Nahum 3:7.

shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women; the gates of thy land are set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire hath devoured thy bars." [7]

Although the city had many rich merchants and countless warriors, they would vanish like insects of a day. Would the rest of the world lament this fate? Far from it. Not only would there be no sorrow; there would be universal rejoicing. "There is no assuaging of thy hurt; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the report of thee clap their hands over thee." [8] One may conceive for himself the appalling scenes over which Nahum gloated. Couriers spread the glad tidings of Nineveh's downfall through the farmsteads, villages, towns and cities of Eastern Asia. The people shouted aloud for joy and their gestures expressed more than their words. The prophet gave what he thought was an entirely sufficient reason for this delirious delight: "Upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually." [9]

It does not become professedly Christian men to hastily condemn this furious zealot of a far less enlightened age than ours for the absence of spiritual control in his message. Nor is it difficult to understand why Nahum felt as he did. At the same time no right minded per-

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[7] Nahum 3:12-13.
[8] Nahum 3:19.
[9] Nahum 3:19.

son can approve his sentiments. His attitude toward Nineveh was created by a personal animosity traceable to insensate superpatriotism. None will question the tyranny of Assyrian rule. But who dare assert that had the prophet possessed the power his rule would have been less cruel and vindictive than that of the enemy state? Besides, if there was a Moral Order at all, doubtless that state and every other must finally have confronted its inevitable justice. Nahum's difficulty was that he could not conceive Jehovah's justice as impartial and universal, and his misapprehension of it really denied the Moral Order itself. He insisted that Jehovah was obligated to wreak His vengeance upon Nineveh for Israel's sake. But he made no reference to Israel's treasonable revolts nor to any penalty these had incurred.

Nahum's view of God was that of modern militarists who obstruct the course of civilization, and rely upon the prophet's benighted doctrines as their warrant for so doing. It did not occur to him that God could desire Assyria's salvation, any more than it occurs to many of the present generation that their national boundaries are nonexistent in the sight of the Father of all men. Nahum reasoned in a circle and clung to the delusion that God abhorred Nineveh because he did. We shall presently learn from the author of the Book of Jonah, another and a far greater prophet, that God had a place in His affection even for Nineveh.

CHAPTER XI

EZEKIEL

ISRAEL'S Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and her Southern Kingdom one hundred and thirty-six years later in 586 B.C. when the Judaeans were forcibly exiled by their Babylonian masters. Thus a millennium of history stretching from the call of Abraham to that of Jeremiah, and including many marvelous events, seemed about to end in catastrophe. Solomon's Temple lay in ruins, its sacred vessels were in pagan hands, its priesthood was dispersed, and the state of which it was the federalizing center had ceased to exist. The solemn warnings of the prophets had been justified by the actual sequence of events. But had the utter desolation frustrated Jehovah's purpose, or would the later prophecies concerning a faithful remnant be verified? This was the engrossing question involved in the second captivity. The answer was given by Ezekiel and by the movement he directed.

It should be said that until the Exile Israel's religion was inseparably associated with her soil. The Deity's

presence was localized in the land of promise. To be torn from it was to be torn from Him. Hence the blow that fell upon Judah stunned the spiritual consciousness of its people. Since every country save their own was profane how could they sing Zion's songs in a strange land? [1] The keenest pain of their separation arose from the belief that the service of God automatically ceased in a foreign region. Had not Hosea said, "They shall not dwell in Jehovah's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean food in Assyria. They shall not pour out wine-offerings to Jehovah, neither shall they be pleasing unto him; their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners . . . it shall not come into the house of Jehovah"? [2] The Babylonians did not object to the worship of Jehovah by the Hebrews. But after His actual residence on Mount Zion was laid low no heathen substitute satisfied their aspirations. Many Jews hung their harps upon the willows. Alienated by their afflictions others turned for consolation to the imperial city's glittering wealth, its gigantic monuments, its fortressed palaces filled with trophies of conquest and its multicolored life of pleasure and of trade.

We can scarcely blame these dispirited Hebrews who said one to another, "The gods of Nebuchadrezzar have vanquished the God of our fathers. He is buried in the

[1] Psalm 137:4.
[2] Hosea 9:3-4.

EZEKIEL

THE PRIEST-PROPHET OF GOD

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. . . . He that hath walketh in my statutes, he that is just, shall surely live."

Ezekiel 18:20, 21.

debris of our beloved Jerusalem. Away with the former things! Let us adjust ourselves to the situation, renounce our nationality and become Babylonians." Resistance to this plea required a steadfastness of character found only in those who could see their cherished hopes annihilated, yet hope again. The fainthearted ones, the weaklings and the time-servers had been weeded out; the fires that consumed Jerusalem also separated the gold from the dross in its citizenship. Nothing was left of spiritual Israel save the "remnant" consisting of her moral aristocracy. Few in number yet sufficient in resolution, they transmitted that revelatory light on which the Exile was destined to have a permanent effect.

These elect souls understood that the extinction of a nation did not necessarily involve the extinction of its mission. Kingdoms and empires were as dust in the balance but the word of the Lord would endure forever.

The leader in what proved to be a religious renaissance was Ezekiel the son of Buzi, and the priest-prophet who first clearly apprehended the possibilities of its development. He gave it coherence and meaning and laid its theological and ritualistic foundations so firmly that they have lasted until now.

Believing with Jeremiah that God was always accessible when sincerely sought, Ezekiel labored for twenty-two years to accomplish the rebirth of Israel in its new form of Judaism. He either recorded or left to future

inference a few facts about himself. A priest of the line of Zadok in Jerusalem, he was still young when taken to Babylon in the first deportation of 597 B.C. His summons to the prophetic office came five years afterwards in 592 B.C., when he was married and living in his own house among his fellow exiles at Tel-abib on the Grand Canal, which he called "the river Chebar," situated near Babylon or Nippur. It was characteristic of Ezekiel that he allowed his Babylonian environment to color the symbolisms with which he clothed the account of his "call." In this portrayal of his vision of God he employed the strange composite figures with four faces, man, lion, ox, and eagle, which he saw on the front of Babylon's temples and palaces, and displayed on her numerous bas-reliefs. Originals or reproductions of these creatures that have been obtained by the arduous labors of archaeologists during the last century may now be seen in the museums of Europe and America.

The "remnant" Ezekiel led endeavored to revive their religion by stressing circumcision and other rites, Sabbath keeping, feasts and fasts and the Mosaic legislation on clean and unclean foods. Anything pertaining to Hebrew cultism was treasured as a defensive armor against the encroachments of an active paganism. The blending of priest, prophet and pastor in Ezekiel enabled him to educate the still immature Judaism which he practically created. Since he had been taken to Babylon with the

first deportation, he knew the city's seductions at first hand, and his exiled countrymen recognized in him a wisdom which experience had ripened.

His writings revealed the high degree of his ministry. He possessed a sensitiveness of almost psychic intensity, and his emotional uprushes occasionally translated him into what John Keats called the realms of gold. In his luminous moments he obtained that God consciousness which impregnated his thinking and utterance. His capacity for absorbed meditation found vent in mystic declarations concerning what was happening at remote distances. He thus announced "He (Jehovah) put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem." [3] While in such moods as this, Ezekiel saw "the moving throne," went through an imaginary siege of his native city, felt himself conveyed there from Babylonia, visualized the resplendent Temple that was yet to be, and lingered in the unforgettable Valley of Dry Bones. He was sometimes dazzled by the celestial radiance that enveloped him and, as already stated, in his efforts to express his transports he made a liberal use of the fantastic imageries suggested by Babylonian mythology and art.

Prestige and power had been given to this renowned metropolis of antiquity because of its geographical situ-

[3] Ezekiel 8:3.

ation and political and religious importance. What Rheims was to the former monarchs of France, and Westminster still is to those of England, Babylon was to Mesopotamia and the empire at large. Its haughtiest kings felt it necessary to receive the coronation rite there. Its development of sculpture, architecture, bas-reliefs, pottery, amulets and jewelry covered many centuries, and evidenced the lavish splendor and strength of the Babylonians. Their laws, commercial regulations, foreign trade and intercourse, and large output of literature furnished further proofs of the empire's immense resources. The dynasty established by Nabopolassar in 625 B.C. involved no breach of continuity in the Assyrian administration, which ushered in new world conditions that are still being vaguely traced in the discoveries of modern archaeologists.

Such were the circumstances confronting Ezekiel who showed in various ways his reliance upon his predecessor Jeremiah. His religious subjectivism, his insistence upon personal responsibility, and his resort to symbolic actions to drive home his messages were reminiscent of Israel's foremost prophet. In chapters fifteen, seventeen and thirty-four of Ezekiel's book he employed parable and allegory with telling effect, and his descriptive force culminated in the twenty-seventh chapter which portrayed Tyre. Other literary classics were his vision of the Divine Glory contained in chapter one, which opened as with the sound

of a trumpet at dawn; and the word picture he drew of Jerusalem in chapter sixteen in which he portrayed the city under the figure of an adopted waif who became the bride of her benefactor only to prove unfaithful. In chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine he insisted that the future ideal state had no need of external defenses. Should a heathen foe dare to disturb its peace Jehovah Himself would make bare His arm and destroy the invader after the manner of the prophet's vision of the terrible Chief of the land of Magog, who was supposed to be "the foe from the North." These poetic oracles furnished a striking contrast to the somewhat monotonous mediocrity of Ezekiel's prose. When the impulse seized him he could be speechless. But while he was musing the Divine fire burned within him and leaped forth intermittently with amazing effect.

A few recurrent ideas controlled his unusually diversified methods of transmission and he voiced them with the confidence conviction inspires. Unlike many of his countrymen he entertained no vain notions about the speedy return of the Hebrews to Palestine, nor did he exhibit any marked sympathy with their griefs and lamentations. His absorbing task was to preserve Israel's soul in Babylon, and to accomplish it he matched his prophetic gifts against the tremendous pull of a fascinating paganism. In the heat of this contention he was sometimes severe because of his determination to revive the

morale of his despondent countrymen. Those among them for whom deliverance from deportation was their daily meat and drink resented his brusque methods and his indifference to their dearest desires. Others who proposed to settle in Babylonia, conform to its religion and associate themselves with its commercial and social affairs, were condemned by Ezekiel. His conception of Israel's Holy and Sovereign Jehovah was too inflexible to concede them any right to betray His purpose.

The prophet held that God must always have at His complete disposal a people sanctified in "His Name" if He was not to be forgotten. Because that Name signified everything pure and righteous, those who professed it should be likewise, for Jehovah tolerated no rivals. This truth had to be steadily maintained by the Hebrews, since the future of the one sufficient Faith lay with them. Israel's religion was at stake and if they deserted it their Deity would be humiliated. For these reasons Ezekiel was convinced Jehovah would not forsake them even though they were unworthy of His protection. But they had to be His peculiar people who renounced the worship of false gods and the hideous rites which defiled that worship. By these and kindred teachings Ezekiel did more to hallow sex relations and wedded and family life than any other prophet of his race. The seal he stamped on such issues remained unbroken for twenty-five centuries.

But he was a priest as well as a prophet and though

he never forgot the prophetic ethic he cultivated it through the priestly ceremonial. His unique combination of both functions enlarged his ministerial office and made it one of the best models for the Jewish and the Christian pastorates. The law of holiness which he invariably construed as total separation to the Divine Will was taught in the Priestly Code which became the basis of ritualistic changes afterwards effected under Ezra and Nehemiah. Yet if Ezekiel conserved in his priestism the spiritualities he evoked by his prophecy he was none the less a firm believer in personal and inward religion. No Old Testament celebrity was more insistent than he upon the individual's responsibility for his actions and his need of a regenerate heart. In truth, one of the outstanding features of his book was its stress on religious personality as the product of Jehovah's indwelling righteousness. Here he applied the lever by which he proposed to raise Israel to sanctity and peace. Here was the secret of his shepherding care for every soul committed to his charge.

The exiles' complaint that they had not deserved their melancholy lot was voiced in the familiar proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." [4] Ezekiel's reply showed that he was one of the most practical of dreamers. He said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Such forthright utterances en-

[4] Ezekiel 18:2

abled him to exercise a profound influence upon subsequent Jewish and Christian thought and doctrine. He did not deny there was a sense in which a man's life was bound up in the lives of his fellows. But he affirmed there was also a sense in which a man's life was strictly individualized and therefore correspondingly responsible. The just man would live but the unjust man must perish. A father's goodness could not save his evil son nor the son's goodness avail for his evil father. Past righteousness did not reduce the guilt of present sin, nor should past sin detract from the merit of present righteousness. The watchman who warned the city of its peril, even though the citizens heeded him not, had discharged his duty. But if he did not warn them, then on his head be their blood!

These austere admonitions were not wanting in tenderness. Even the Messiah was visualized by Ezekiel, not as a royal ruler but as the Shepherd of His flock who sought the lost, bound up the wounded and visited the sick and the afflicted. The prophet felt foresworn to serve with sacrificial energy every soul he could reach. Their impending doom intensified his desire to rescue them. Their obedient response kindled his joy. He was in pastoral concerns "a watchman over the house of Israel." "Make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die?" was his constant exhortation.[5] Whether as priest,

[5] Ezekiel 18:31

symbolist, sacramentarian, evangelist or seer, he amplified his messages with an imposing array of metaphors and illustrations derived from his memories of the homeland and from Babylonia's panoramic scenes. It was God's priest who said, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." It was God's prophet who testified in the words, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." It was the combined priest-prophet of God who declared, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them." [6]

Under no circumstances would Ezekiel divorce outward and visible signs from their inward and spiritual graces. For him they were one as the body and soul are one, and he constantly stressed their unity. Few if any were more interested in rites and ceremonies than he, but he was also interested in the hallowing of the hidden man of the heart by its subordination to God's Will.

This survey of the prophet would not be complete without reference to the rather dusky splendor of those visions which, though they baffle the interpreter, quicken the imaginative mind. He dreamed of the theocratic state and clothed his dream with one of the Bible's creative utterances. He saw in the distant future the vindication

[6] Ezekiel 36:25-27.

of our rough human story; the new Jerusalem whose commanding structure was a Temple of worship, its ruling group a stainless priesthood, and its life as a city wholly sanctified unto Jehovah. He actually dwelt in that sanctuary but access to Him was through its appointed ordinances. This was an ecclesiastic's prediction of the millennium interfused with a prophet's passion for inward and outward goodness. Everybody and everything would be holy unto the Lord. Ezekiel's vision still awaits its realization. But the burdened world in which we live is nearer to it than were the few saddened exiles to whom his dream was first unfolded. Its exhortation, moreover, bore fruit when at a later time, led by the priesthood, Israel's exiles in Babylonia returned to Jerusalem and built another Temple there.

Enough has been said to indicate that Ezekiel was the great churchman of Israel's prophetic order and that as such he occupied a necessary place in it. Countless believers who insist that the guarantee of regenerating grace is the ritual which gives it historic continuity in appropriate forms, could properly adopt Ezekiel as their patron saint. He needs no extended eulogy. His advocacy of the new type of theocracy which became a vitalizing force in Israel's subsequent life and doctrine is his adequate credential. Beneath the mysterious shadows that ensphered his great personality we discern the ardent spirit who felt

infinitely more than he could express, the seer whose visions it was scarcely lawful for him to relate, the priest who was also the pastor *par excellence* in his care for the afflicted expatriates he loved and tended with scrupulous faithfulness.

CHAPTER XII

THE NAMELESS PROPHET

THE prophet who next figured in Israel's tempestuous history was the Great Unknown whose voice was lifted up in a lull of silence before another impending storm of war and conquest broke. It is universally acknowledged that his writings constitute one of the "peaks in Darien" of Biblical literature. Before noting their apparent excellence, however, let us consider the conflicting migrations of cultures and nations and the various assertions of race and religion which evoked the starlike response of "The Second Isaiah." The ritualistic movement Ezekiel introduced was afterwards formulated in a body of laws known as the Priestly Code consisting of the latest stratum of the Pentateuch. It molded Judaism's national character for centuries but it also quickened the decline of its spiritual spontaneity. Meanwhile the Hebrews in Babylon hoped for the overthrow of their conquerors and their own restoration to Jerusalem. Cyrus, King of Persia, had already subdued the Median Empire in 550 B.C. and four years later that of Lydia fell before his vigorous on-

slaught, after which the collapse of Babylon was but a question of time.

During this interval, crowded with the portents of further strife, Hebraism produced a man of princely imagination whose entire conception of its religion differed intrinsically from that of Ezekiel and his school. This "Nameless Prophet" became contemporary Judaism's most gifted pleader, and the chapters he bequeathed have enriched the religious life and work of after ages. He focused in himself the finest traditions of Biblical prophecy and enriched it by his unsurpassed spiritual insight. Whatever in his predecessors was majestic and impressive was restated by him with a wealth of feeling and a clarity of vision due to the severest individual and national affliction. Indeed it would be difficult to deny him the primacy of his "goodly fellowship," did not this honor already belong to Jeremiah, in whose predictions the Divine grace of Israel's oracles attained its height.

The majority of scholars agree that of the book bearing Isaiah's name the greater part of chapters one to thirty-three belonged to the Isaiah of Hezekiah's reign; that chapters forty to fifty-five were written during the Second Exile, and that chapters thirty-four and thirty-five and fifty-six to sixty-six were written a century later.[1] The above-named additions were included in the first Isaiah's book because of their supposed resemblance to its spirit

[1] Chapters 36 to 39 are historical.

and viewpoint. The disentanglement of "the three Isaiahs" was a triumph of modern learning which reappraised the values of the Second or Deutero-Isaiah as by far the greatest of the three, a seer who regarded the universe as Jehovah's moral theater in which He used kingdoms and rulers and their laws and policies to manifest His immutable purpose for righteousness. The Unknown Prophet's treatment of this theme revealed the intrinsic elevation of his nature and his message. Its wellnigh incomparable style, beautiful metaphors and haunting allusions have made him more familiar to lovers of the Bible than many of its writers whose names are common property.

The opening chords of Handel's *Messiah* wedded this anonymous seer's consoling words to those harmonies which leave emotion in the heart and music in the memory. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." [2] Who has not felt his power in this and other inspired utterances? The chapter beginning "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem" contains the imperishable word which struck renewed life into Judaea's exiles.[3] Again, that which opens with the sentences: "Who hath believed

[2] Isaiah 40:1-2.
[3] Isaiah 52:1.

THE NAMELESS PROPHET

THE FORERUNNER OF GOD'S GREAT DAY

"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people."

Isaiah 40:1.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; But the word of the Lord shall stand forever."

Isaiah 40:8.

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness . . . and set these for a covenant of the people,
For a light of the nations."

Isaiah 42:6.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, And the man of iniquity his thoughts, And let him return unto the Lord, and He will have compassion upon him, And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Isaiah 55:7.

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; Because the Lord hath anointed me
To bring good tidings unto the humble;
He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
To comfort all that mourn."

Isaiah 61:1.

our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" is perhaps as often quoted by God's servants to indifferent generations as any passage in the Old Testament.[4] "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, to buy wine and milk without money and without price" is a hospitable invitation which afterwards adorned the overtures of the Gospel of God's Son.[5] Whenever men and women read these chapters they realize how clearly they disclose Heaven's forgiveness and cleansing through the mighty soul of "The Nameless Prophet."

He set himself to sustain Judah's belief in deliverance from exile. The salvation promised by Jehovah was near. The triumphs of Persia under Cyrus showed that he was heaven's chosen agent for the execution of judgment upon Babylon. "Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot? He giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings; he giveth them as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow." The reply comes with symphonic strength from none other than Jehovah, "I have raised up one from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name: and he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay." [6]

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[4] Isaiah 53:1.
[5] Isaiah 55:1.
[6] Isaiah 41:2, 25.

On the eve of what has been termed The Persian Period this prophet predicted the fall of the Babylonian empire which had succeeded that of Assyria and lasted less than a century. The attack of Cyrus upon the kingdoms of Western Asia resulted in his capture of Babylon in 539 B.C., about fifty years after Nebuchadrezzar's destruction of Jerusalem. These campaigns made the Persian monarch the ruler of the greatest empire the world had then seen. In his behalf Jehovah decreed, "I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron; and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel." [7]

Though the prophet's identity is lost to us evidently he was thoroughly conversant with the dominant imperialism of his era and the epoch-making events that befell it. From his enforced obscurity he watched the sure advance of the Persian armies and saw in them Jehovah's weapon for Israel's rescue. The sudden shifting of world politics from Babylonian to Persian control was subjected to His dominion. No other prophet surpassed this spiritual statesman's grasp on the essential factors in a gigantic contest for earthly power, or his perception of the indisturbable design underlying its chequered for-

[7] Isaiah 45:2-3.

tunes. Nothing could be trivial in the career of so puissant a personality who reacted to such issues and who contended for the immutable principles that governed their outcome.

He inherited Judah's hatred of Babylon as the oppressor of his nation. But his hate did not blur his perspective nor divert him to lesser things. When he heard of the subjugation of the Medes and that the rich Croesus of Lydia had been overthrown, Asia Minor subdued, and Nabonidus the king shut up in Babylon, he cried aloud in exultation, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. . . . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever." [8] So assured was he that Judah's thraldom was about to end that he bade angelic ministrants make wide and smooth the road for the entrance of the exiles into Palestine. "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God." In a stanza of charm and loveliness he depicted the rapture of the expected liberation: "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." [9]

"Never say," remarked Henry James, "that you know the last word of any human heart." It is not for us to

[8] Isaiah 40:6-8.
[9] Isaiah 55:12.

dogmatize about the larger faith and more penetrating vision of such a soul as "The Nameless Prophet." His religious qualities raised him in singular degree and a special sense to a far more real realm than ours. His conceptions and his language testify not only to the innate greatness of the man, but to the supreme greatness of the God whom he served with extraordinary genius and faithfulness. His chapters in the Book of Isaiah must always stand among the revelations of Jehovah's design not alone for Judah but for every nation. They attained an ultimate strength and grace of thought and form, they probed the profoundest religious mysteries, they explored the Infinite and showed it to his readers.

The new Israel's release imposed on her fresh responsibilities. She was to be God's lamp of truth and freedom in the world. "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." [10] In this and much more to the same effect the prophet applied his doctrine of Jehovah's absolute governance.

His fortieth chapter is unsurpassed in any devotional literature. It contradicts the current assumption that modern knowledge of the universe has outdistanced all

[10] Isaiah 42:6-7.

theological concepts of its Creator. Surely those who urge this upon us have forgotten what the prophet of twenty-five centuries ago had to say concerning Him who held the waters in the hollow of His hand, and measured the heavens with a span; to whom the globe itself was but as a grain of dust; in whose scales the mountains were weighed, and the hills in His balance. Because He was the Almighty, the Maker of the ends of the earth who neither fainted nor grew weary, He would strengthen His people and fulfill His promises to them. Engraved as in eternal brass His pledges could not be broken. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." [11]

In summary the Second Isaiah gave Judaism and the Christian Church a magnificent theology of God based on His self-expression in the visible world and the manifestations of His will in the human story. No less profoundly did the prophet conceive the Fatherly love and protection of Him before whom the nations were but as "a drop in a bucket." This teaching was further humanized by his unique doctrine of the "Suffering Servant." What are known as "The Servant Songs" occur in chapters forty-two, forty-nine, fifty, fifty-two and fifty-three. Their principal theme was the exaltation of a single

[11] Isaiah 43:2.

and elect Personality through whom Jehovah would accomplish the salvation of His people. By his idealization of that Personality the Nameless Prophet became the Evangelist of the Old Testament. He introduced Jehovah's hero in terms of extreme suffering and humiliation which insured his spiritual enthronement. "Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles." [12] In the most moving of these Servant Songs he was portrayed as "despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . With his stripes we are healed. . . . Jehovah . . . hath put him to grief. . . . He poured out his soul unto death." [13]

Here, as Professor Rudolf Kittel has observed, a new type of prophecy began, and one perhaps instigated by Jeremiah's method of reflection. "The older prophets repeated what they saw and heard. Their personality was fully absorbed in the subject and they received what they gave directly from God. 'Thus spake Jehovah' was the full truth for them." [14] But "The Nameless Prophet's" subjectivity was so apparent that what he transmitted became a Voice from heaven of which he was only the

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[12] Isaiah 42:1.
[13] Isaiah 53:3ff.
[14] Cf. *Great Men and Movements in Israel,* p. 391ff.

medium. In after ages the deepest interest of his readers was aroused by this mysterious Servant of God who endured persecution and martyrdom for the sins of the people. Some expositors considered him the embodiment of Israel herself and of her prolonged sufferings in expatriation. Others regarded him as the promised Messiah in the unexpected form of the suffering Savior. Still others identified him with Jeremiah, or with "The Nameless Prophet" himself, or with one of his unknown contemporaries, or with Judaism's faithful remnant. A further group asserted that the reference was not to any personality but to the redemptive principle in life which was here dramatized in action.

An extensive literature has gathered around the discussion of the problem. Many thoughtful readers still believe the Hebrew nation was the original of the prophet's imperishable portrait. Was not that nation raised up to be God's priesthood for the redemption of the believing world? Had not its history been characterized by affliction, bondage and exile? Surely there was a sense in which Israel must die if she would live and declare the works of the Lord. But the prophet had a second alternative. Judgment and mercy would ultimately prevail through a stricken and mutilated Israel upon whom was laid the iniquity of mankind.

Certainly the tragical experiences of the Hebrew people spread Divine truth among the nations, and in the full-

ness of time the greatest of great David's sons incarnated the inmost meaning not only of Israel's history but also that of the human race itself. Accordingly for twenty centuries the Christian interpretation has been that Jehovah's suffering Servant must be regarded as an individual of flesh and blood like ourselves and that the sole clue to Israel's enigmatical history is in Jesus as the Redeemer of mankind.

When Philip journeyed from Jerusalem he overtook a distinguished visitor to that city returning in his chariot to his Ethiopian home. While traveling he read the Second Isaiah's descriptions of the unique Servant of God and inquired of Philip, "I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet thus? Of himself or of some other?" The question is still being asked. But Philip had no doubt as to the answer. He promptly told the Ethiopian official that the portrait was a prevision of the Crucified and Risen Christ, and that through Him the law of sacrificial service was forever established in human life to be its sole hope of redemption, purity and perpetuity here and hereafter.[15]

[15] Acts 8:25-40

CHAPTER XIII

HAGGAI

In the latter half of the year 520 B.C. an aged and venerable man named Haggai appeared in Israel and entered upon the prophetic office. As one who must have known the sacred City before the Exile he felt the stimulus of Jerusalem's past glories. Hence his specific service was that he aroused his countrymen to renewed religious enterprises in a period of pronounced discouragement. The "Nameless Prophet's" prediction that when the Persian monarch Cyrus had made his empire secure he would permit the chosen people to return to their native land had been fulfilled. For Cyrus was usually considerate toward captured peoples and his generous treatment of the Jews was consistent with his settled policy.

But apart from a small group they did not greet the once eagerly coveted permission with enthusiasm. Nor should their hesitation to accept it be misconstrued. It was granted in 538 B.C. about sixty years after their deportation in 597 B.C., and fifty years subsequent to Jerusalem's capture in 586 B.C., the event which marked the

beginning of the Exile proper. The large majority of Israelites who were then in their twenties had died. Their younger compatriots deported with them were now well advanced in years. The children who had been born in Babylon naturally did not have the affection for Palestine which their parents and grandparents cherished. They had also acquired a degree of social and commercial status, built their own homes, developed their own culture and identified themselves in numerous other ways with the land of their conquerors. Its restraints sat easily on these later exiles. If Babylon kept them in bondage its fetters were of gold and doubtless they asked what was to be gained by the once longed-for repatriation. This involved the surrender of their Babylonian property and the severance of associations which time had mellowed. They must endure a hazardous journey of many hundreds of miles without adequate equipment, and upon arriving at Jerusalem they had no guarantee of their prosperity there nor would there be any preparation for their coming. The return thus meant for them starting life afresh heavily handicapped by the necessity of reëstablishing themselves under difficult conditions in what to them was a foreign country. These objections seemed insuperable to many Hebrews who were wedded to Babylon's wealth and brilliance. They had become accustomed to singing the Lord's song in the land of their exile, and they had no desire to sing it in their ancestral Judaea at

so costly a price. Their attitude anticipated that of many modern Jews who are indifferent to the Zionist movement and who do not respond to the cry "Back to Palestine!"

Even so, approximately thirty to forty-two thousand Hebrew men, women and children ultimately made the return journey which included several migrations during the period between 538 B.C. and 444 B.C. Under the new arrangement Judah was designated a province of the Persian empire and Sheshbazzar, a descendant of the house of David, was appointed its nominal governor. The homeward pilgrimages proved exceedingly toilsome and the pilgrims' problems increased after Jerusalem was finally reached. If they recalled "The Nameless Prophet's" glowing predictions of their joyous entry it must have been with considerable chagrin. Similar experiences have frequently disillusioned exiles who after prolonged absence from "their own, their native land" found it far different from what their ardent fancies had painted. These repatriated Hebrews were dismayed by the conditions they encountered. The "Holy City" of their dreams proved to be a fiction. During the Exile, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines and Samaritans had taken possession of Jewish territory and could not be evicted without constant tumult and expensive litigation. Distress prevailed until Israel's livelihood was threatened and her economic difficulties imperiled her religion. In Babylon the Jewish Faith had taken the course indicated by Ezekiel who

insisted on Israel's "separation," her ritualistic purity and her strict observance of fasts and feasts. On the other hand, the Hebrews who were left in Judah had maintained the more popular forms of Jehovah worship and also some of their questionable practices. They further debased the national religion by intermarriage with their non-Jewish neighbors. In the outcome there was no love lost between the repatriates and the previous inhabitants and they soon became estranged from each other.

Despite these drawbacks the rebuilding of the Temple was proposed and the work begun. But it got no farther than laying the foundations and erecting an altar for burnt offerings, after which the structure remained unfinished for twenty years, a depressing evidence of unfaith and indifference. To increase the general lassitude, at this time a bad harvest seems to have brought famine on the land. Nor had imperial affairs beyond its borders been at all promising. The huge Persian empire was so agitated by frequent uprisings in its subject provinces that when Darius succeeded its founder Cyrus he faced widespread restlessness and incipient revolt. Possibly the small Hebrew colony settled around Jerusalem supposed the time had come to strike a blow for Israel's political freedom. In any case Haggai emerged from one of the lowest levels of the general discontent to tell his countrymen that the famine was Jehovah's penalty for their neglect of His

honor. Undaunted by economic obstacles, and unconcerned about foreign disturbances they should finish the task they had ignominiously forsaken. A hopeful future was in store for the new Temple and the chosen race. At first the people held aloof. But they recalled the heartening messages of the earlier prophets that revolutionary changes would precede the Messiah's advent and the setting up of His Kingdom. The apparent nearness of this once "far off, divine event" was the aged Haggai's unvarying theme and he devoted himself to its dissemination. When the discouraged Israelites objected he lashed them into action by reminding them that while they dwelt in comfortable houses Jehovah's House lay waste. If their herds and crops were failing for what other reason could this be except their religious apathy?

Spurred by the prophet's exhortation the people resumed the rebuilding of the Temple, the corner stone of which was laid on December the twenty-fourth, 520 B.C. But the poverty of the repatriates could not provide for such magnificence as that with which Solomon had embellished the former structure. They had no means at their disposal to ransack the mines and forests of foreign lands for the adornment of their humble sanctuary. Building material was so scarce that they were compelled to use the rough stones of the field. Invidious comparisons were made by the idle and the disaffected

between the beauty of the older Temple and the plainness of its successor. But Haggai's courage rose against these criticisms in behalf of the building he did not live to see completed. "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work." [1]

Contemptible though the new Temple might seem to prejudiced onlookers the wealth of the nations would presently pour into it. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace." [2]

In simple unpretentious ways the prophet endeavored to reanimate Judah's religious energies. He was a traditionalist rather than an original thinker and the influence of the priestly caste was evident in his homilies. His relation of the Temple and its ceremonies to Israel's temporal and spiritual advantages echoed Ezekiel's doctrine that she must be ceremonially clean before she could enjoy God's countenance. Haggai lacked the stern and searching note of Jeremiah who had already declared that an undefiled Faith was entirely independent of external supports. Ideally this premier of the prophets was correct, but Haggai's surroundings have to be considered.

[1] Haggai 2:4.
[2] Haggai 2:8-9.

Drought, crop failure, unfriendly aliens, a defenseless capital and a feeble colony of Jews bereft of resolution, were the explanation of his prophetic tone. He used the everyday language of a jaded people not to apologize for their dejection but to challenge it. The ancient promise that One should yet sit on David's throne who would legislate for God among all nations was repeated in his message and revived its weary hearers.

That an aged man in whom life's tides were at the ebb should have overcome an uncongenial environment and preserved an essential religious continuity was a notable achievement. Some mobilizing center was needed, some concrete symbol of spiritual unity, some strong reminder of the prospective realization of the teachings of the patriarchs and the prophets. From this viewpoint Haggai's emphasis on externalities was legitimate and after-events vindicated it. For though externalities are often carried to extremes this is no argument against their useful function. On the contrary there have been centuries when, apart from outward things, the spiritualities themselves would have been at a loss. Interest in God's House may very well mean interest in "the mystery of godliness" which that House embodies. Nor is it beside the point to urge that the architecture of every sacred edifice should testify of the "Holiest in the Height" to the most casual passer-by. If aged Haggai's zeal for the renovated Temple were felt by all who profess the Jewish or

the Christian Faith institutional religion would gain an impetus which could hardly fail to consecrate afresh the civilization we inherit, the greatest menace of which is its secularized materialism.

CHAPTER XIV

ZECHARIAH

THE Babylonian Hebrews who returned to Jerusalem had to wait at least fifteen years before their recolonization made any perceptible progress. Although the city was partly repopulated before their arrival, the repatriates, as we have seen, confronted a very difficult situation. Their return was no longer a joy but a hardship. Their temporal means were insecure, they had lost their religious anchorage and their social condition was lamentable. Many feared they were about to meet the fate described by the Psalmist when "the end of their days had come." Haggai's valiant effort to fortify these disconsolates for their task was now seconded by his contemporary Zechariah who thoroughly sympathized with the older prophet's ideals and aims. Their close alliance for the relief of Israel's distressed children was evidenced by the way in which they dated their messages.

Independent sources prove that Darius became the ruler of the Persian empire in 521 B.C. and Haggai definitely placed his attempt to reinvigorate the Jewish

people in "the second year of Darius" which would be 520 B.C. During this year the prophet gave four addresses. He also named the days of their deliverance which were the first day of the sixth month, the twenty-first day of the seventh month and two on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month.[1] The preciseness of Haggai's record showed the influence of the "priestly" historians for whom numbers and dates were matters of great importance. Zechariah likewise observed their custom. His first prophecy was given in the eighth month of the year 520 B.C. which was also the second year of the reign of Darius. His later ones came after the last given by Haggai, and Zechariah's final utterance was heard in 518 B.C., the fourth year of the reign of Darius.[2] Even at this date the reconstruction of the Temple was still in process and the building was finished in 515 B.C., "the sixth year of the reign of Darius the King." [3]

Such bare facts may not be very interesting in themselves but they are valuable for Bible students who would ascertain the circumstances to which these two prophets adapted their ministry. In the case of Zechariah they further indicate that the man who wrote chapters one to eight of the book bearing his name could not have written chapters nine to fourteen. The critical questions the

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[1] Haggai 1:1; 2:1, 10, 20.
[2] Zechariah 1:1; 7:1.
[3] Ezra 6:15.

statement suggests are beyond the scope of this volume, and it must suffice to say that the situation presupposed in the second part of the prophecies of Zechariah radically differed from that constituting the background of the first part. Many scholars place chapters nine to fourteen at least two centuries later when prophecy had fallen into disrepute. Our interpretation of Zechariah's character and work is therefore confined to the first half of his book which in itself clearly reveals the decline of the prophetic vocation.

Evidently the exhortations of Haggai had not been altogether successful. We do not know whether he died of old age, or abandoned his office in despair, or continued his appeals without recording them. But obviously Zechariah began where Haggai ended, and perhaps the former who was also the younger man had strength to carry on the mission to which both were dedicated. If such was the case Zechariah sustained a relation to Haggai akin to that which Joshua sustained to Moses and Elisha to Elijah. The mantle of the master fell on his disciple. Yet Zechariah differed from his older contemporary in several particulars. Both were wholly committed to the Temple's restoration because they were convinced that Israel's spiritual welfare was bound up in it; and both held the same priestly viewpoint except that it was more pronounced in Zechariah. Haggai avowed that the poverty of the people was rooted in their neglect of God's House.

Zechariah seconded the avowal and strengthened it by adding that when the Temple was restored there would be no more seasons of drought and destitution, no more useless searching for work and bread by rebellious toilers. "For there shall be the seed of peace; the vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. . . . So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong." [4]

Another trace of the priestly tendency which silenced the diviner music of the Hebrew oracles was Zechariah's belief that contact with Jehovah was established through a mediator. The older prophets had felt themselves to be one with God's Will. He was ever present and active in them and their messages. Now, however, He was so far removed and remote that direct intercourse with Him had ceased. The possibility of man's personal fellowship with his Maker was thus denied by implication. As a substitute Zechariah's lively imagination followed abundant precedent in conceiving an angel who became the intermediary of his messages and the prophet frequently referred to this attendant spirit as the one who "talked with him." No longer did Israel hear the arresting prologue "The word of the Lord came unto me." The thrilling invocations of those patricians of the Spirit Isaiah and

[4] Zechariah 8:12-13.

Jeremiah were impossible on the lower level which Zechariah occupied. The development of priestism hastened the degeneration of his calling and his first vision indicated the process. A man stood among the myrtle trees to whom came four apocalyptic riders on horses of different colors. They had been sent to survey the globe and to bring back news of its affairs. "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." On this report the angel who explained the vision to the prophet exclaimed, "O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?" [5]

Apparently Zechariah was swayed by Ezekiel's description of "the Holy City." In his vision of the lamps fed by the two olive trees he gave the civil and religious authorities practical equality. The olive trees which kept the lamps aglow were "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." [6] This allusion could only be to Zerubbabel as the governor of the province and to Joshua its high priest. Although, to use modern terms, Church and State were not a single institution for Zechariah, apparently he could not think of the one apart from the other.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of his ministry

[5] Zechariah 1:11-12.
[6] Zechariah 4:14.

was its extensive use of the mystical and figurative style afterwards known as "apocalyptic." He was not the first prophet to yield to its seductions but he was the first to clothe his entire message in its symbolic garb. Even a superficial survey of his eight visions manifests to what a large extent the later apocalyptic writers whose works abounded in the era immediately preceding Christianity were indebted to Zechariah for their ideas and their language. Readers of the New Testament's apocalyptic book, the "Revelation of St. John," do not have to be reminded of variously colored horses, measuring lines, golden candlesticks, and other remarkable metaphors and figures, not a few of which were originally used by Zechariah. While apocalyptism was based on prophecy, nevertheless it denatured its essential qualities. The spiritual sway of Israel's great seers could not thrive in its enervating atmosphere. Its conceptions were too bizarre, its speech too ornate, its underlying philosophy too materialistic for the instrumentation of genuine prophecy. Its substance was impoverished by "the beggarly rudiments" to which St. Paul refers.[7] Above all its meanings were so obscure and the reactions it created so mistaken that it fell far short of achieving the religious results at which it aimed.

For these reasons Zechariah has not been numbered

[7] Galatians 4:9.

among the notable homilists of Israel. His indulgence in inexplicable fantasies of angelology was the outcome of his formal conception of life's meanings. His indorsement of Haggai's proclamation of Zerubbabel as the promised Messiah excited false hopes in his countrymen. In February of the year 519 B.C. he appealed to the wealthy Jews of Babylonia for subscriptions to provide a crown for Zerubbabel. The people awaited the expected tidings of Persia's collapse with feverish anxiety, since when it occurred Zerubbabel would take the throne of the deposed Darius. They were doomed to disappointment. In 519 and 518 B.C. Darius, who was one of the greatest rulers the East has produced, suppressed the rebellion in Babylonia and other provinces, and remained the monarch of his vast dominions until 485 B.C. The end of Zerubbabel is not known but the Persian authorities may have put him to death.

The consequences of Zechariah's ecclesiasticism still exist to separate the Christian Household of Faith. One of the fundamental differences between prophetic and ritualistic religion involves the right of man's approach to God. For the prophet He is nigh at hand and not afar off. For the priest He is inaccessible save through appointed personalities and agencies. The priestly doctrine was strongly developed in Israel's later history, and upon its practices rather than upon New Testament teachings

present-day sacerdotalism depends for its scriptural recognition.

Nevertheless an inclusive estimate of Zechariah's values should mention the unifying temper in which he showed the connection between the prophet and the apocalypticist. He foresaw the day when "many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah" and when "the iniquity of that land" will be removed.[8] Then there should be peace between every man and his neighbor. He told of one whom he called "The Branch", a metaphor used by Isaiah and Jeremiah, and said of him, "He shall build the temple of Jehovah . . . and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne." [9] Although the direct reference of this passage was to Zerubbabel it also hints at the Messianic king. Zechariah demanded Israel's reformation in words which though reminiscent of his predecessors revealed his underlying aim. "Execute true judgment, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the sojourner, nor the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart." [10] In summary Zechariah's prophecy was not so much an emotional message as it was a literary product and as such compa-

[8] Zechariah 2; 3:9.
[9] Zechariah 6:12-13.
[10] Zechariah 7:9-10.

rable to a sacred drama of the Middle Ages. Its artistic merits were admirable but it lacked the regenerating strength of Hebrew prophecy at its apex. If in Deuteronomy the Hebrew religion became a codification of laws and rituals, in this prophet it assumed decidedly conventional forms.

CHAPTER XV

OBADIAH

THE fatuous provincialism which marred Obadiah's little document was shared by the prophet Nahum. The utterances of both these intense sectionalists were closely akin, and Obadiah's hostility toward Edom was paralleled by that which Nahum felt toward Nineveh. Each was a fierce hater of the particular land that had wronged his own, a temper so characteristically modern as well as ancient in its narrowness and pride that doubtless it commends them to the isolationists who still abound to plague civilization.

Although Obadiah's book is a mere fragment of twenty-one verses it presents several perplexing critical problems. Nothing is known of the personality or the career of its author save what may be gathered from inference. Thirteen Obadiahs are mentioned in the Old Testament but none of them was related to this prophecy. The name, which signifies "The Servant of Jehovah," was customary in Israel and some scholars have suggested that as in the case of Malachi, meaning "My Messenger,"

so in that of Obadiah it was used as a description of the writer and not as his proper name. His prophecies also date from different periods, and open with words found in the fifteenth to the seventeenth verses of the fifty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah. Since hate of Edom was one of Judah's chronic passions, the original source of those verses is not easy to determine. They may have been Obadiah's, or again both his words and those of Jeremiah may have been quotations from an earlier author. The central part of Obadiah's single chapter portrays the sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B.C., and therefore must have been written after that event. The date usually assigned to this portion is 460 B.C. Its burden was "the day of the Lord" and the condign judgment it would bring with it. Because of the apocalyptic conclusion of the chapter it has been dated at a much later period than the central section.

If, however, Obadiah's prophecies have no ascertainable unity of authorship or date, their decided oneness of purpose is expressed in the saying, "Edom is a hateful people; Edom is to be destroyed." Who then was Edom and what was the explanation of Israel's vehement animosity against her? The Old Testament's historical books furnish the answer in their frequent allusions to hostilities against Edom on Judah's southern frontier. These outbreaks were the more virulent because of the blood relationship between the two nations. Esau was the ances-

tor of the Edomites, as his twin brother Jacob was the ancestor of the Israelites. The antipathy between the brothers was inherited by their descendants and time heaped fuel on its fires. When Jacob's household migrated to Egypt Esau's settled well south of the Dead Sea. After the children of Israel escaped Egyptian servitude and were slowly making their way back to Canaan, the Edomites refused them a passage through their province.[1]

The Israelites never forgot nor forgave that refusal. While they were conquering Canaan the Edomites resisted them at every stage in the campaign. In aftertimes Saul and David waged war on these hereditary foes. The latter monarch established garrisons in the territory of the Edomites and on one occasion he slew every male in Edom.[2] Yet as often as they were subdued they regained their independence, and their habitual belligerence injured both nations. In Joram's days "Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves. Then Joram passed over to Zair (Mount Seir in the Edomite territory) and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites that compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots; and the people fled to their tents." [3]

These recurrent raids occurred with fluctuating re-

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[1] Numbers 20:14-21.
[2] 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:13-14.
[3] 2 Kings 8:20-21.

sults until the capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., when the conduct of the Edomites drove the iron of hate still deeper into Israel's soul. They rejoiced over her downfall and participated in the plundering of the city. Still later the Edomites themselves were victimized by the rising Nabataean power which drove them northward into Judaea where they became known as Idumaeans. But the final humiliation of the Hebrews came with Rome's selection of the Herodian dynasty for Israel's governance. An Idumaean family of that name represented the imperial authority in Judaea during one hundred years. The forced conversion of the Idumaeans under the Maccabees helped to reconcile the Jews to the Herodian rule, and to explain why Herod the Great rebuilt the Temple.

If Obadiah's book is read against this lurid background of an endless and venomous family quarrel its meaning becomes apparent. The Edomites were described as occupying those mountain fastnesses from which they were ultimately expelled, and the rock-hewn buildings of Petra bear testimony today to the fidelity of the prophet's words that they dwelt "in the clefts of the rock; whose habitation is high." [4] The attack on them was not comparable with that of robbers who flee when they have bagged the spoil. It was war to the knife; Edom must be so utterly wiped out that nothing would be left. Obadiah's

[4] Obadiah v. 3.

apology for this ruthlessness summarized the unhappy past. "For the violence done to thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them." [5] He suggested that the Edomites gloried over the disaster and stood at the crossroads to capture Israel's fugitives and transfer them to the Babylonians to become their slaves. He exulted over Edom's doom in the "day of Jehovah" and bespoke adequate penalties for her treachery. "As thou hast done, it shall be done to thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head." The house of Esau was likened to dry stubble consumed by a running fire. In contrast with Edom's fate Obadiah visualized the glory which should be Israel's, "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions," and Mount Zion's sway would be paramount when "there shall not be any remaining in the house of Esau." [6]

Attempts to modify the severity of these utterances by interpreting "the house of Jacob" and "the house of Esau" as types representing the strength of righteousness as against unrighteousness do not account for the palpable purpose of Obadiah's book. The document may be given this application but it is far-fetched and uncon-

[5] Obadiah v. 10-11.
[6] Obadiah v. 17-18.

vincing. Unquestionably the writer's principal aim was expressed in what he said. Those who argue that because the Bible is "the Word of God" therefore He is responsible for every sentiment it contains, will be embarrassed by Obadiah's "Song of Hate." Those who understand, however, that the Bible is "the word of God" transmitted in the words of men and that its Divine grain is to be winnowed from its human husks, need have no difficulty. The prophet's anger against Israel's hereditary foes was a natural feeling. Yet since man develops his moralities not by obeying but by overcoming Nature, anger is not the highest feeling to which he may submit, and therefore it cannot embody the purposes of God. It has its place here because Holy Writ is the companion of every human lot, and the interpreter and guide of the race not only as it should be but as it actually is. In the progressive unfolding of Divine revelation humanity has gradually gained that knowledge of the Highest Will which forbids the deliberate stimulation of nationalistic prejudices and conflicts that postpone the reign of universal brotherhood in justice and peace.

In this important sense Obadiah's message is "profitable for instruction" and its negative forms are not the less educational because they are forbidden. It teaches us that hate silences the voice of compassion, blinds the soul's vision, corrupts the social fabric, inflicts needless grief and dismay on innocent multitudes, and consigns

the political systems founded upon it to self-wrought destruction. From this incensed prophet we may learn that no nationalism is defensible if it presumes to limit either God's love and righteousness or our own moral obligations.

CHAPTER XVI

MALACHI

THE author of this book is unknown and the word "Malachi" is not a proper name. It is taken from the opening sentences of the third chapter of the book, which begin, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." Since "my messenger" is a translation of the Hebrew word "Malachi" it would seem that as the prophet himself was not known, some editor prefixed this title to the book, after which it was spoken of as that of "My Messenger" or of "Malachi." It is advisable for the sake of convenience, however, to retain the familiar term "Malachi" as a proper name.

Whoever he was, this prophet followed Haggai and Zechariah sixty years later. They were years of stress and strain for the restored Jewish community. Their expectations of temporal and religious prosperity as the result of the rebuilding of the Temple had not been met. Quite otherwise, after Zerubbabel's collapse the colony's enthusiasm waned and the Divine guidance was no longer experienced by its instructors. The little book before us

belonged to the period between Zerubbabel and Ezra. It suggests that Israel's fortunes had sunk to a very low ebb. Her heavy indebtedness, excessive taxation, grasshopper plagues and crop failures generated widespread distress. Spiritual interest perceptibly declined, the Temple worship was left to a faithful few and racial purity was tainted by frequent intermarriages between Hebrews and foreigners. The Samaritans were already a foreign element destined to be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense for centuries to come. In brief, the nation stood on the edge of dissolution. Apparently the attempt to recolonize the land of their fathers had ended in confusion and defeat for these former exiles, and they feared that every trace of their adventurous return would soon disappear.

The anonymous prophecy of Malachi showed how strongly loyal Hebrews dreaded material adversity, spiritual inertia, indifference to ritual and the contamination of their racial blood. The buoyant note of the greatest of Malachi's predecessors had yielded in his ministry to these adverse factors which forbade its repetition. The stories afterwards told by Ezra and Nehemiah explained this pessimism. Artaxerxes the First was the ruler of the Persian empire, in which Judah was then included as a subject province, and the annalist Nehemiah was one of the Jews who held a responsible position at the Persian court. The book of memories he wrote referred to his

grief when he learned of the calamities of his homeland. The monarch, noticing his distress, inquired the reason for it, whereupon he replied "Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" [1] Moved by his servant's sorrow Artaxerxes granted him permission to go to Jerusalem with a selected company of Jews and make what improvements he could. Upon his arrival Nehemiah encountered a widespread demoralization which increased his anxiety. Undaunted by the numerous hindrances confronting him, however, he not only rebuilt the walls of the city, but aided by other patriots he instituted a series of social and religious reforms founded on the Priestly Code.

As the date of Nehemiah's permission to return to the Holy City was 444 B.C., that of the book of Malachi could not be far from 460 B.C. Its author framed serious indictments against his countrymen which were sustained later by Nehemiah's testimony. The responsible representatives of the national Faith had betrayed their trust. The evils of its priesthood were abominable before God. Its members offered Him polluted bread and diseased animals, and performed the duties of the altar in a perfunctory way. Even in the act of ministering before it their manner denoted utter boredom. Their behavior

[1] Nehemiah 2:3.

toward the Persian governor of Judah was far more reverent than their behavior toward Jehovah. If this was the disposition of the priesthood what could be expected of the people?

Another evidence of their low moral status was their contempt for the sanctity of the marriage bond. Much else that was vital disappeared with matrimonial fidelity and Malachi protested sturdily against its violation. The law governing divorce recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy had been ignored by its official guardians. The home should be the social unit and its children treasured as Jehovah's gift. Affection for "the wife of his youth" was the coveted distinction of a pious Hebrew.

Thus the prophet lamented the prevalent laxity concerning these Divine regulations. To make bad worse a man too often sought release from his marital obligations that he might wed "the daughter of a foreign god," namely a woman who was not of the Jewish race. Had not "Jehovah sought a godly seed?" "Therefore," said Malachi, "take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah." [2]

The prophet waged a lively controversy with his people as rebels and renegades. He condemned his opponents out of their own mouths and repeated their words against them. They played fast and loose with their vows, with-

[2] Malachi 2:14-15-15.

held the Lord's just dues and treated His demands with skeptical indifference. "What of it," was their reply, "may not a man do as he likes with his own?" Malachi voiced Jehovah's answer to this cynical assertion. "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right, and fear not me." [3] The indictment breathed the spirit and speech of Amos himself. Malachi went still further in his protest against the nation which taunted a seemingly deceitful and powerless Deity with neglecting His obligation. "Would it not be better for them," they asked, "to become as the Gentiles whose strength was unabated; whose cities were emporiums of military and financial power?"

The indignant seer repudiated their backslidings and infidelities and the frivolous mockery with which they endeavored to cloak their secret miseries. He stressed the approaching judgment of which Elijah himself would be the forerunner and which should purge Israel of her iniquities. He showed a sound instinct for the facts in the case by summoning the priesthood to a complete change of heart and life. Their "lips should keep knowledge, and they (the people) should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts." If

[3] Malachi 3:6.

the priests refused to obey His mandate they would be cut off from the Temple, what they blessed would be cursed, and they themselves be made "contemptible and base before all the people." [4]

Malachi demanded that the nation should also repent of its sins and cease to desecrate the purpose of its Maker. "Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." [5] Malachi's emphasis on tithes and offerings revealed his allegiance to institutional and ritualistic religion. Yet he was more than a barren legalist and though his writings favored the sacerdotal drift of his age they were also interfused with the ethical teachings of the earlier prophets. These had revolted against mere externalities and unsparingly arraigned the futility of worship offered by impure hearts and unclean hands. But Malachi occupied a different position. The land of promise had been devastated, Jerusalem was reduced to political insignificance and its inhabitants were pitiably few and weak.

Individualism in religion was not equal to the task of Israel's regeneration, for which the historic continuity and visible witness of an organized society were indis-

[4] Malachi 2:7, 9.
[5] Malachi 3:10.

pensable. Outward forms were necessary for an advance from the alphabetical phase into which Zion's worship had relapsed. Yet those forms were not to be treated as substitutes for the soul's inner life. The conduct of the worshippers must vindicate their profession and their lives must agree with their lips. Malachi's convictions justified his impeachment of priests and people. He was jealous for Israel's integrity and for her Divine calling. He earnestly strove for an established Faith and Order on which God and the nation could alike rely.

Did his countrymen heed the prophet's message? Was there in them such a sincere adoration of Jehovah that His gracious promise could be fulfilled: "Unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"? [6] Perhaps not in any broad sense. Yet Malachi spoke of the chosen few whose names were inscribed in the book of God's remembrance, of the remnant who regirded the loin and relit the torch, and who adhered the more steadfastly to the doctrines of the fathers because they were openly forsaken by their wayward children.

[6] Malachi 4:2.

CHAPTER XVII

JOEL

THE intolerant nationalism which prevailed in Nahum and Obadiah also characterized the prophecies of Joel. These were greatly moderated, however, by his constant note of praise for Israel rather than lurid denunciation of her antagonists. Yet if no "Song of Hate" marred his utterances, neither did he exhibit that fearless indignation against the chosen people's transgressions which animated the former prophets. Instead Joel depicted the Hebrews as very devout and well pleasing to Jehovah. His chief concern was with Judah and all He did among other nations was done for her sake. As unfortunate aliens these faced the cheerless prospect of burning cities and depopulated lands, whereas everything in Israel was to be happy and blessed. She "shall abide for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation . . . for Jehovah dwelleth in Zion." [1] Self-complacency was the order of the day, since an all-wise and omnipotent Deity confined His benevolence to the elect race. The Mosaic Law which

[1] Joel 3:20-21.

had been expanded and enlarged since Ezekiel's time was the national standard. The regular ritual of the Temple guaranteed God's grace and protection. Flattering predictions of a propitious future rounded out this document motivated by an ardent yet purblind patriotism.

Nothing is known of Joel except that his father's name was Pethuel. Here as elsewhere when interpreting the prophets we have to estimate the messenger by the nature of his message. If this plainly expressed his inner self he was a religious man, a diligent student of the older seers, a firm believer in Judah's temporal and spiritual institutions, and a born optimist whose outlook ignored sinister surroundings. Everything he said was determined by his intense love for Israel. His sole objective was her rehabilitation and this had to be effected at the cost of the rest of mankind. He did not yield to outbursts of rage against her foes nor implore Heaven's vengeance upon them. He simply manifested that isolated affection which is one of the subtle forms of selfishness because it not only imposes artificial barriers upon man's benevolence but deems them binding on God Himself.

Joel lived late in the Persian period, probably about 400 B.C. Nehemiah's reforms were taken for granted by him and he reiterated what they had accomplished. The Temple was the seat of genuine religion and Jerusalem the center of Israel's national being. The blessed Hebrews were those who lived under the Holy City's

grateful shade, and also those to whom he referred as "scattered among the nations." For Joel the priest and not the prophet was the Lord's appointed mediator, and his departure from the heart of prophetic ministry was widened by the large place he gave to apocalyptic hopes.

Notwithstanding his stressing of externalisms Joel manifested the spiritual sympathies which marked him as a true though minor prophet. This was further shown by the fact that he made things present the basis of his teaching about things to come. The former conception of Biblical expositors that every prophet's chief mission was to forecast the future is set aside by Joel's wise practice. Nor was he alone in this. His fellow prophets had concentrated on their own eras and if at intervals they reveled in the dream of a hereafter and a hope, they did so to enforce the truth and duty of the hour. Despite his apocalyptic tendencies Joel thus united the present with his vision of the future. The God who was acting in the prophet's day would act in all tomorrows. He who then revealed Himself according to the measure of man's receptivity would presently make His Will universally known.

The immediate cause of Joel's prophecy was an unprecedented plague of locusts which had recently stripped bare the entire countryside. Nothing in the Old Testament is more graphic than his description of this pest and modern travelers who have seen similar ravages con-

firm his vivid picture. The locusts came in countless millions, they marched with the precision of disciplined troops, nothing could stop them, they climbed high walls, entered houses, overran barns and consumed meadows and gardens. After they had passed, the landscape resembled a prairie swept by a scorching fire. "The field is laid waste, the land mourneth; for the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth . . . the harvest of the field is perished . . . joy is withered away from the sons of men . . . the food (is) cut off from before our eyes . . . the seeds rot under their clods . . . the beasts groan, the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture . . . the water brooks are dried up." [2]

So overwhelming was the visitation that Joel viewed its occurrence as "the day of Jehovah." His zeal for ritualistic religion was expressed by his lamentation that because of the plague "the meat-offering and the drink-offering are withholden from the house of your God." The hunger and misery the locusts inflicted on the poor were obscured by the prophet's demand for sacerdotal needs. He had no explanation of the calamity except as a punishment for the nation's iniquities. The locusts were indeed as a great army for numbers and destructiveness. But worse still, they were God's army. He and none other directed their devourings, and their "roaring" was the

[2] Joel 1:10-20.

sound of His voice. Hence there was but one recourse: Israel had to return to Jehovah; a penitent nation would find Him merciful. The summons went forth for a national "fast and solemn assembly" in which everyone must unite in the prayer, "Spare thy people, O Jehovah!" [3] Here again Joel's formalism prevailed but it was not to be a covering for a recalcitrant Israel. For once the prophet overcame the priest in him. If he was committed to a national convocation as one remedy for individual transgressions, none the less did he exhort his countrymen to "rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness." [4] The solemn assembly convened, its supplications ascended and in due time the promised relief was obtained. "The years that the locust had eaten" were restored, the enemies of the Hebrews could no longer mock them, nor ask "Where is their God?" Sorrow had endured for a night but joy came with the morning.

Joel's interpretation of this historical event as "a day of Jehovah" accompanied by chastisement but ending in peace fertilized his mind. He saw in it the portents of a still more wonderful deliverance. The locust plague and its outcome only adumbrated the greater 'day' to come

[3] Joel 2:17.
[4] Joel 2:13.

affecting not Judah alone but the whole human race and ending in Israel's universal and permanent supremacy. The last half of the book beginning with the twenty-eighth verse of the second chapter contains his meditation upon what had been as the precursor of what should be. The sign of the greater day's approach was the baptism of every member of the chosen race by the Divine Spirit. The visions hitherto confined to the prophets would then become a nation-wide possession.

In apocalyptic fashion Joel declared that this religious effulgence would be attended by miraculous phenomena in the realm of Nature. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." [5] The dispersed Jews would return to their native city and land. Final judgment unto condemnation would fall on "all nations" with special reference to Phoenicia and Philistia, Egypt and Edom, because of their harsh treatment of Hebrew captives. A great valley would be the scene of this august assize. Judah's men of war were to be prepared as God's agents for the execution of His sentence of annihilation upon these offending Powers. The language of the earlier prophets was reversed to read, "Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears." One figure familiar to later apocalyptic writers was here employed: "Send forth thy sickle, and reap . . . for the

[5] Joel 2:31.

harvest of the earth is ripe . . . he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God." [6]

Moreover, Joel predicted the irreversible verdict of the approaching general judgment. Judah would obtain complete security and Jerusalem become the joy of the nation. It was for Israel's sake that the Lord became "a man of war"; for her increase and perpetuity He sank to the level of an oriental despot. In her behalf He led Judah's supermen in an orgy of physical force. Such ideas demonstrate that Joel was the child of his age rather than of the ages. His lurid words signified a long descent from the humane conceptions of "The Nameless Prophet" of the Exile and his colleagues. They had contended that Jehovah's redemptive purposes were universal in scope and that Israel was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles." We can appreciate Joel's viewpoint, but we do not have to accept it. Nor would this be possible without surrendering the precepts of far greater servants of Jehovah than Joel. He was warranted in believing that God's Will must prevail in the long last. But he was unwarranted in his interpretation of what that Will's prevalence meant.

Nevertheless, earnest and devout men and women still accept Joel's position and look for the fulfillment of his words both in their temper and by his methods. It was reserved for a fisherman of his own race to show us "a

[6] Revelation 14:15; 19:15.

more excellent way." On the Day of Pentecost which marked the birth of the Christian Church, a small group of Christ's disciples gathered privately for prayer in Jerusalem. There they suddenly experienced the Holy Spirit's baptism and in His illumination they became the founders of a new civilization. The history of their people, the significance of their ancient Faith and the limitless reign of God's grace unto salvation were alike transformed for them by the descent of the Paraclete as the successor of their Crucified and Risen Lord. Heretofore they had been as watchers in a dark chamber where a masterpiece of portraiture was hung. Only when the Holy Spirit's light came could they behold its beauty and its power. That inward vision and its realizations lifted them beyond the fear of consequence. They could no longer contain themselves but must needs go forth and tell the multitudes assembled at Jerusalem what they had seen and felt.

Some of the spectators declared these strange enthusiasts were intoxicated. Whereupon St. Peter's memory traveled back to words first heard in that same city more than four hundred years past and in those words he found his answer. "This is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel." [7] The prophet's materialism was consumed by the holy flame of love that burned in the Apostle's heart. St. Peter's nationalism merged into uni-

[7] Acts 2:16.

versalism, for on that Pentecostal Day he announced that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." [8] Then and there He became "a refuge unto his people" in an infinite sense which Joel could not conceive. Then and there the new Ecclesia arose in the deathless life of the God of the prophets and the apostles.

[8] Acts 2:21.

CHAPTER XVIII

HABAKKUK

THOSE who approach the study of this book through its noble lyric describing Jehovah's triumphant manifestation, are aware that Habakkuk was a master of eloquence and imagery in whose writings ethical and religious elements of prophecy were admirably blended. He also advocated a philosophy of history by which the preëxilic seers had often read a profoundly moral meaning into national disaster. So conspicuously did he evince their spirit and that of the prophets who came directly after the Exile, that until recent years he was generally regarded as a contemporary of Jeremiah. His generous outlook, breadth of sympathy, and persuasive speech encouraged the chosen people. His discourse displayed a constancy which could be more easily explained had Habakkuk lived in the period and shared the attitude of Israel's greatest statesman of God.

Many modern scholars contend that Habakkuk's writings should be placed in the fourth century before Christ rather than the sixth, and dated about 330 B.C. instead

of 600 B.C. If their contention is correct it invests the prophet's message with additional interest. As we have seen, his predecessors of the fifth and fourth centuries were devoted to Israel's welfare and antagonistic toward that of humanity at large. Other thickly populated kingdoms and empires were regarded as the victims of a forthcoming Divine vengeance which would result in their final extinction. Hence if the later date which some authorities assign to Habakkuk's book could be authenticated, it would add greatly to the author's credit that he challenged the rabid nationalism of his age and reminded his countrymen that Jehovah was not a tribal Deity but the God of the whole human family, with purposes which made Israel's accepted beliefs appear ridiculous.

On the other hand in order to assign the book this later date it is necessary to assume that the name "Chaldeans" occurring in the sixth verse of the first chapter of Habakkuk was substituted by some scribe for the name "Chittim" or "Kittim" (meaning Greek). Such conjectural emendation is always precarious and should not be admitted except on substantial evidence. The issue raised is entirely too critical for consideration here, and the circumstances under which Habakkuk's message was given are not materially different whether the earlier or later date is accepted. If, however, the later date is assumed,

HABAKKUK

THE SENTINEL OF GOD

"The Lord is in His holy temple; Let all the earth keep silence before Him."

Habakkuk 2:20.

"The righteous shall live by his faith."

Habakkuk 2:4.

"Woe to him that establisheth a city by iniquity!"

Habakkuk 2:12.

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord As the waters cover the sea."

Habakkuk 2:14.

it connects Alexander the Great's worldwide empire with the problems the prophet faced.

Proceeding on the traditional assumption of the earlier date, we observe that he complained to Jehovah about various forms of social injustice then prevalent in Judah, specifically those by which the strong oppressed the weak. Jehovah replied that He was raising up the "Chaldeans" to be His instrument for the penalization of the oppressors. But when the merciless measures of the enemy nation were exposed, the prophet revolted against them and wondered if he had erred in believing that God would use so vile an agency. "They gather captives as the sand," was his cry, and in his distress he resorted to the meditation which he symbolized as his "watch tower" in order that he might obtain a clearer knowledge of the Divine Mind.

Lucretius speaks in a striking figure of the moral elevation necessary for those who would clearly survey the tumults encircling them. He paints the array of opposing armies in the field, the gleam of their burnished armor, the charging squadrons that shake the solid earth. But on a tranquil eminence these hurrying legions appear as though they stood still, and the flash of their long-drawn battle lines becomes, as it were, one sheet of steady flame. A kindred experience awaited Habakkuk in his "watch tower." There he was assured that God's design could not fail. "Though it tarry" he was exhorted to

"wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay." [1] The Chaldean conquerors were the unwitting servants of that design in ways more spacious than the prophet dreamed. Their mighty empire was doomed and its collapse would reassert that moral sovereignty to which all temporal rule was subject. Since might heedless of right carried in itself the seed of death, it could not indefinitely endure. Therefore the God who guaranteed that even Chaldea was only the bondservant of a Higher Power could be trusted to vindicate His cause by upholding the right and punishing the wrong.

Again, so far as the book's later date is involved, it can at least be said that Habakkuk's description of the enemy's methods exactly fitted those of the Macedonian hosts. His frequent references to the conqueror's bibulous habits agreed with the historic fact that Alexander drank himself to death. The language Habakkuk used to depict the invading army's advance showed that it marched eastward, whereas the Chaldean forces would have marched westward to this attack. In fact the dramatic drive of the Greek soldiers into Asia took them so far from home that they rebelled and refused to advance. And though as we have observed Habakkuk's prophecies remain much the same irrespective of their date, it certainly adds to their interest if he had in mind the astounding career of the brilliant young Greek com-

[1] Habakkuk 2:3.

mander who wept because he had no more worlds to conquer. For notwithstanding his grave personal defects Alexander represents a culture which not even his military campaigns could obliterate. As compared with the Greeks the Chaldeans meant little to the future of humanity. Such was the evident superiority of Greek civilization that Alexander, who was Aristotle's pupil, held he had the right to compel other nations to submit to its manifest advantages.

The spread of the Greek language, literature and laws was doubtless desirable, and Habakkuk himself may have thought so at first. In this more intellectual race from the Mediterranean's northern shores the prophet presumably detected another of God's chosen instruments. But Alexander's violation of justice and mercy blighted the prospects created by his triumphs in war, and his determination to enforce his "kultur" at the sword's point aroused Habakkuk's indignation. Intrinsically beneficial though the new civilization was, its leader's arrogant militarism invalidated its claim to dominate the world. His conscienceless execution of the ambitious plans of his empire was a conclusive argument against its stewardship of a classic type of life and thought.

At last it dawned on the prophet that he confronted more complicated issues than he had suspected. The sorry plight of Israel's faithful children was his original difficulty and one which he believed could be overcome

by human intervention. Then the agents of that intervention themselves became a more serious difficulty. The strongest imperial organization of his age enforced nefarious policies which played fast and loose with every righteous principle. For the moment Habakkuk was staggered by the immensity of events which have since monopolized the history of their period. Yet after he had reflected long and darkly upon them the light broke, and he obtained his "vision." Strong in the faith it produced he saw that his confidence must henceforth not be founded on men or nations but on the moral order of the universe. The bewildering clash of earthly stratagems and conflicts was controlled by a benevolent omnipotence which subordinated them to righteous ends. The wisdom of that omnipotence confuted the best concerted schemes of empires and their statesmen. Its activities were mightier than those of their generals and armies.

What was that mysterious Power? Habakkuk answered that it was the very nature of Jehovah Himself revealed in the spiritual laws which know no change; of which Sophocles sang in his "Antigone,"

> *"They are not of today nor yesterday*
> *But live forever, nor can man assign*
> *When first they sprang to being."*

Neither hasting nor resting they moved forward at their appointed time and toward their intended goal.

Thus firmly fixed, the prophet asserted two daring propositions. The first was that the apparently invincible empire which "enlargeth its desire as Sheol, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied," should be buried in oblivion. "The cup of Jehovah's right hand shall come round unto thee and foul shame shall be upon thy glory." The moral height from which Habakkuk hurled this judgment was his consciousness of God's presence in His Holy Temple. "Let all the earth keep silence before him." [2] The second proposition was the logical sequence of the first. Judah need not despair. Notwithstanding her small size and political feebleness Jehovah would not permit her to be overwhelmed. In truth, she was more wealthy in spirit than all her foes combined. The Lord whose glance ran through the universe and ruled its frame dwelt in every home, village, town and city of His Israel.

Habakkuk's ascensive plea was that everyone ought to render implicit obedience to the laws of Jehovah's Order and serve Him with unswerving loyalty. In objective speech the prophet counseled that in quietness and confidence believing souls should entrust their necessities to God with the assurance that their dependence would be justified. Its vindication may seem to linger. "The portion of the wicked may be fat and his food plenteous; for a while the righteous may be swallowed up by the

[2] Habakkuk 2:5, 16, 20.

wicked."[3] Nevertheless, said the prophet in words contributory to the religious development of succeeding centuries, "the righteous shall live by his faith;"[4] or as the margin of the Revised Version reads, "the righteous shall live in his faithfulness."

Two questions arise here; must good always be on the scaffold and evil ever on the throne? Has the righteous man no reward save that of postponed compensation? Habakkuk or a man of like mind answered these queries in a poetic outburst. This lyric, which concluded the book, was the organ voice of spiritual Israel speaking through the author, but at what exact era in its post-exilic history cannot be ascertained. Nor is it necessary to assign any particular date to the moving hymn which follows. It is as applicable to one period as another and has seldom been more timely than now:

"For though the fig-tree shall not flourish,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labor of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no food;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,
I will joy in the God of my salvation."

[3] Cf. Habakkuk 1:13, 16.
[4] Habakkuk 2:4.

CHAPTER XIX

JONAH

No Old Testament book has been more thoroughly misunderstood than the one bearing the name of the great personality whose imaginative strength renewed Israel's prophetic mission and postponed the long night of her dispersion. Yet widespread misconceptions of this remarkable document have found little in it except a fanciful tale exciting derision in shallow minds and contempt in skeptical ones. Orthodox traditionalists who insist that *Jonah* is an historical document, to be reverenced as a convincing proof of God's miraculous intervention in human affairs, have exposed it to the unsparing ridicule of a host of rationalists. These in turn assert that bibliolaters who credit the book with historicity furnish conclusive evidence of the superstition which is the substratum of any belief in the supernatural. The first group makes a literal acceptance of *Jonah* the test of faith in the Bible as the very "Word of God;" the second group employs the same test to demonstrate the vulnerability of that "Word." An intermediate group is disposed to view

the Bible as strictly human literature because this particular book's details are plainly romantic.

The confusion these different estimates have caused could scarcely be exceeded. Many who sincerely love the Holy Scriptures and who rightly contend that their leaven sanctifies life, play directly into their opponents' hands by making spurious claims for *Jonah* which its unknown author would doubtless have repudiated. The student has but to read his story to be convinced that he never intended it as a record of actual events. But whoever approaches it assuming that it is an inerrant recital of such events to be accepted without demur, shuts out both the author's purpose and an intelligent discussion of its spiritual significance. Were our Lord's Parables treated in similar fashion the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Unjust Steward and the Owner of the Vineyard would have to be taken not as idealizations drawn from life's actual experiences but as living persons known or heard of by Jesus. His use of wayside incidents and familiar characters to give entrance to loftiest truths through lowliest doors would thus be deprived of its priceless values. Yet multitudes who rejoice in the Parables as expressing the poetry of God's Gospel in Christ resent the parabolic method as used by the author of *Jonah*. Impervious to reason as to fact, they stimulate the flippant humor which seldom fails to mention Balaam's ass or Jonah's whale without a grin.

JONAH

THE MESSENGER OF GOD

"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord."
Jonah 1:8.

"I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and compassionate, long suffering and abundant in mercy."
Jonah 4:2.

Heated debates have raged about a great fish either existent or specially created for the purpose, which gulped down the grumbling prophet. Elaborate speculations concerning the number of days he could remain alive after being swallowed have wasted valuable time and energy. Defenders of the literal truth of the story seem in the heat of contention to have overlooked certain imaginative elements it contains. For instance, how did it happen that the pagan sailors in that troubled vessel prayed to the God of whom they had never heard? Or that while within the fish Jonah composed a beautiful Hebrew lyric and thanked Jehovah for his rescue before it was accomplished? Or that the metropolitan city of Nineveh could understand the prophet's foreign speech and its inhabitants repent in the name of a Deity utterly unknown to them? Or that a gourd large enough to give shelter from a hot Eastern sun could spring up and die down in a few hours? Surely these fanciful marvels furnish legitimate openings for critical inquiry! If they were not the draperies of an impressive spiritual event, what were they? If again that event signalized a new epoch in Judaism which vindicated its world mission, what is their relative importance? Once the notion is abandoned, however, that the book is sober history, and it is accepted as a dramatic parable, the grave obstacles hitherto thwarting its satisfactory interpretation disappear and leave us free to appropriate its message.

It is quite probable that the figure of the fish was suggested by the sea monster employed in the fifty-first chapter of Jeremiah to symbolize Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonian Exile. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt that the story was written with a definite situation in mind and also to deal with it in a constructive way. The postexilic movements which reached their climax in the Reformation led by Ezra and Nehemiah have already been mentioned in the chapters on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. What was known as Judaism gradually gained national ascendency. "The Law" became Heaven's Charter and Constitution for Hebraism. Its authoritative explanation according to "the tradition of the fathers" was seconded by a meticulously observed ritual. Spiritual liberty was smothered beneath a formalism which, while it satisfied the religious mediocrity of the chosen people, did not seriously disturb their profane habits. So long as they obeyed the scribe and the priest they were assured of Jehovah's good will. Church and State, if these terms are permissible, were practically one and the same institution and their unity heightened the isolation and the arrogance of the Jews. Everything symptomatic of rigid exclusiveness abounded in them. They ignored the instruction of their former seers that Israel was elected for service and not for privilege. The vast human world stretching beyond their little province had no meaning save as it fed their peculiar conceits. The humane con-

sciousness which shared that world's strife and grief, its peace and joy, was scouted as the suggestion of unclean spirits who would defile Hebraic purity. Here the separation between the teaching of Israel's elect minds and the religion of the ordinary Jew was patent, and the so-called "jest" of Jonah was written to obliterate that separation.

Few moral victories won by the Old Testament prophets rank higher than this which he who was one of the last and the greatest of them obtained over the adamantine bigotry of his countrymen. They boasted in possessive terms of their sure standing with Jehovah. His choicest gifts were bestowed on the Israelites who were by birthright a nation of kings and priests unto God. Hence only as that nation kept to itself and maintained its unmixed descent could it preserve its Divine endowments. Nehemiah and Ezra persistently advocated this creed of insurmountable barriers and adopted stringent measures to make it operative. They compelled husbands who had married foreign wives to banish them and their children, and arranged for the public readings of "The Law" in which the protuberant pharisaism of the New Testament was first manifested. Yet its fossilizing process was not allowed to proceed without protest. One of these was made in the exquisite idyll of Ruth's love story. Although of anonymous authorship its internal evidence supports the view that this book appeared soon after the changes

effected by Judaism's legalists and ritualists. It confronted the hidebound provincials of the period with the fact that no less a dignitary than David, the nation's royal hero, was himself of "heathen" paternity. He descended from Boaz and Ruth as their great grandson, and Ruth was not a Jewess but a daughter of the despised Moabites. What effect the document had upon the opinions it contradicted cannot be ascertained but certainly the facts as stated were unanswerable.

The book of Jonah expressed a similar wisdom, breadth and sympathy. In its pages Israel's true being and mission reappeared evoked by a genius who deeply understood Jehovah's love for man as man. Its artistic allegory rebuked the theories which had eaten the heart out of Judaism. Jonah sank out of sight because in a very real sense he was engulfed in the author's oceanic benevolence, but he did not vanish before he had shown some despicable traits of character. To be sure, there was a flash of humanness in him when he told the sailors to throw him overboard and by so doing save the sinking ship. But it soon passed and he was "displeased exceedingly" over Nineveh's repentance. He would rather have seen the city he hated destroyed than redeemed. Avid for its extermination he could hardly await the hour when Jehovah would launch His thunderbolt upon its people. In all this the typical Hebrew's portrait was presented with consummate skill as a self-satisfied pupil

on whom God was enforcing a lesson he did not desire to learn.

The point of comprehension, then, is not Jonah but the spiritual insight and catholic temper of his anonymous creator. The leading character of the book should be subordinated to its universal message. In the words of Dr. Heinrich Cornill, it is "one of the grandest and deepest" documents ever given either to Jew or Gentile. When his countrymen asserted that God belonged to them alone and they alone to God, the gifted dramatist replied, "God belongs to everybody, and it is our indefeasible obligation to make this organic truth known." Of course his doctrine was anathema to contemporary Judaism. Aimed at its very heart, it should have expelled its vanity and pride. If the Hebrews who then read it would see themselves as Jehovah saw them, they had only to look at Jonah. He was the embodiment of their unwillingness to share with mankind the revelation of the All Righteous Father. The portrayal gained in excellence by the choice of Nineveh as the city to receive the glad tidings of a merciful God who was waiting to pardon penitents of every tribe and nation. For the city represented whatever was abhorrent to the Jew. Had not Nahum's "Song of Hate" crystallized the feelings of his people toward Nineveh? Yet depraved as it was and though one crust of iniquity from center to circumference, crowded with false gods and vitiated by their ob-

scene worship, God's clemency would respond to its contrition. Such were the terms thrust on the murmuring prophet who was their reluctant messenger. The closing glimpse given of him showed a petulant and petty man, still nursing sullen anger because his treasured fiction of racial superiority had reeled under a crushing blow.

There is not a more modern book in the Old Testament than that of Jonah. Its ingenious mode of narration and dramatic strength are born of the religious imagination in which it was composed. Its stirring sentences cannot be paraphrased. It sets forth as self-evident the truth that the Creator of the whole human family can know no distinction of race, creed or physical boundaries since all peoples are His offspring, beloved and longed for. In this and other respects the author was the prince of those pioneers who in every subsequent age have proclaimed God's Fatherhood and man's consequent Brotherhood. The prophet who wrote this document stretches forth a helping hand to all who love their fellow men.

Isolated individuals, churches and nations of today are delineated by him with disconcerting realism. The folly and wickedness of their dissidence, and their false appraisals of themselves, of their Maker and of the race He loves, deserve the chastening of this epoch-making drama. It anticipated the incurable democracy of the Christian Evangel and expressed in concrete and unfor-

gettable ways that Evangel's precepts of charity and fraternity. Patriots who bluster about their native virtues, ecclesiastics who pose as the arbiters of human destiny and racial devotees who by falsely supposing that God respects the accidents of geography and physical relationship charge Him with being guilty of favoritism, alike have their fadeless portrait in Jonah, the typical example of the superpatriot and ecclesiastical bigot of his day and our own.

CHAPTER XX

DANIEL

THE central figure whose name is assigned to this document was the last and one of the most popular of the prophets. Apart from a few fragments and additions found elsewhere in the Old Testament *Daniel* was Israel's final literary production. Some scholars however have spoken of *Jonah* as the closing work, and accordingly though included in the Jewish canon Daniel is not reckoned as belonging to the prophetic ministry. His place therein was first acknowledged by the Septuagint and on its authority the Christian Church designated Daniel, together with Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as the four great prophets in contradistinction to the so-called minor ones. For many subsequent centuries it was supposed that the book's actual author was none other than Daniel himself, who seems to have been born a Babylonian captive and deported either in 597 B.C. or 586 B.C.

The maintenance of this view necessitated the dogma that the first six chapters described actual events in the lives of the prophet and his friends, and that the last

six chapters which are widely separated in style and method from the first six, contained an accurate prediction of miraculous happenings still in the near or distant future. This interpretation invested the book with enthralling interest for lovers of symbolic Scripture. Exhaustless pains were devoted to its exposition. Fantastic theories and speculations were expended on the superman who escaped the half-famished lions, on the three Hebrew heroes who moved unhurt in a fiery furnace the flames of which consumed some of the bystanders, on Belshazzar's gorgeous banquet interrupted by the mysterious warning "Mene, Tekel," and on the Colossus with feet of clay. These persons, idealizations, and descriptions became household words throughout Jewry and Christendom. Numerous inventions and homilies enforced their providential meanings. Contemporary history was ransacked for evidence to support the belief that a humble Jewish captive became Babylon's ruler, second only in dignity and influence to the monarch himself.

As in the case of *Jonah,* so in that of *Daniel,* fanciful assertions of this kind were so generally accepted that they became another test of orthodoxy. Those who denied the historicity of either document were accused of heresy. Those who contended that *Daniel* belonged with *Jonah* to the didactic literature of Holy Scripture were charged with skepticism. Notwithstanding strenuous opposition, the researches of reliable scholars of our time

have justified these erstwhile skeptics. Modern students are reasonably convinced that instead of dating Daniel from the reign of Nebuchadrezzar in the sixth century before Christ, the book really belongs to the year 167 B.C. Weighty arguments which cannot be recited at length here have been advanced for this conclusion. Those arguments are related to matters of language, to the truth or otherwise of the book's historical allusions and the fact that these increase in accuracy as the author approaches the third and second centuries before Christ. The document was also written partly in Aramaic and contains Persian and Greek words for which the earlier era of the Babylonian exile furnishes no satisfactory explanation. In brief, on the basis of its older date *Daniel* is immune to intelligent appreciation and deprived of its finest contributions to the readers' spiritual edification. But if its later date is conceded the book is transformed. It ceases to be a mere thaumaturgy and is replete with religious meanings deserving everyone's reverent consideration.

Its anonymous author was a man of courage and dependability. Its lessons are applicable to every era, and especially to such as are sadly out of joint. It passes at a bound out of the misty realm of legends that overtax credulity into the luminous realm of those Divine oracles which enlighten the mind and confirm the heart's witness for God. Its range encircles heaven's hierarchies

DANIEL

THE STATESMAN OF GOD

"They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Daniel 12:3.

"And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding."

Daniel 2:21.

and earth's empires, including in its scope the four archangels, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the title of the Messianic Ruler as "the Son of Man," and the idealized portraits of the great potentates Nebuchadrezzar and Darius. The author's recitals indicate a tremendous crisis when Hebraism was engaged in a life or death struggle with Hellenism. The "apocalypse" which afterwards became a distinct branch of Jewish thought and letters made its chief appearance in this document. The notable features of *Daniel* represent a late stage in Hebrew history and reflect the persecutions which then threatened the disappearance of the Jewish nation and its religion.

Antiochus Epiphanes the Fourth, the contemporary ruler of the larger part of the Greek Empire, was a monarch of inordinate vanity who bestowed on himself the name "Epiphanes," meaning the "Manifested One." His pride and folly convinced some of his subjects that he was actually insane and they dubbed him in derision, "Epimanes," meaning "The Madman." He was bent on the spread of the Greek language, literature and culture throughout his territories and some politically minded Hebrews yielded to the tyrannical pressure of his methods. Others, however, clung steadfastly to their ancestral Faith. Enraged by their obstinacy, Antiochus, whose ideas were as limited as his disposition was violent, endeavored to exterminate their religion, and em-

ployed the police powers of the state to enforce his repressive edicts. The Book of Maccabees describes this crusade at length, albeit with some exaggerations. He deposed Onias the high priest and gave his office to Jason, an avowed Hellenist, who paid a large sum of money for the priesthood, whereupon his rival Menelaus offered a still larger amount for the succession and obtained it. These bribers and sycophants had their parasites and the quarrels between them and the orthodox group agitated Jerusalem and Judaea.

Under the pretense of settling the strife, in 170 B.C. Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, partly demolished its walls, slaughtered many of its principal citizens and plundered the Temple. Two years later he returned to the city angered by the failure of his plan to invade Egypt and showed no mercy on the unfortunate Hebrews. An account of his atrocities is given by Josephus and also by the author of the first book of the Maccabees. He desecrated Jehovah's altar by devoting it to the service of Zeus and demanding that sacrifices to the Greek god should be offered upon it. The sacred rites of circumcision and Sabbath observance, the public reading of the Law, and everything else that had to do with the worship of God, were forbidden. Foreign mercenaries and freebooters were the instruments of the Greek tyrant's vengeance and thousands of men, women and children were massacred. A reign of terror spread throughout the

countryside where espionage prevailed in hamlet and town. Informers lurked at every corner and quite frequently a man's foes were those of his own household. These outrages culminated when swine were sacrificed on the new altar of the Temple and its priests compelled to eat unclean flesh. The horrors of the invasion were never forgotten by devout Jews. The Book of Daniel summed them up as "the abomination of desolation," a phrase subsequently repeated by our Lord Himself.

But the atrocities of Antiochus revived the cause they were intended to destroy. They aroused neutral Hebrews to energetic action, compelled wavering ones to stand fast and completed in Judaism the fixed character it had previously lacked. What the exhortations of Ezra and Nehemiah to strict obedience of "The Law" failed to accomplish the fires of martyrdom achieved. Undoubtedly Hellenism had already made rapid progress among some aristocratic Hebrews and the Jewish priesthood was also leavened by its tenets. But the madness of Antiochus condemned anything for which he stood and also swept the Jewish people into a resistance born of desperation. Nothing could withstand their onset. They drove away his armies and the campaign ended in the founding of a Jewish state under the House of the Maccabees.

The Book of Daniel was written in 167 B.C. when this decisive conflict was at its height. Its pages glow in the light of burning cities and echo the noise of armies and

collapsing kingdoms. If we can conceive the unspeakable sufferings of a people betrayed within and assailed without, confronted by a fine culture which in turn was debauched by its merciless agents, the backgrounds of the document are before us. By assuming the name and the viewpoints of Daniel as a historic personality, the writer adopted a literary method common to his age. Popular stories about Daniel which related him to the Exile were already current. The author assembled and recast them, probably stressing the incidents that bore on his purpose, which was to keep alive a nation's faith and courage in the face of terrific odds. At first he did this by showing how the Jews in Babylon had overcome the severest temptations to abandon their religion. They refused to yield in the den of hungry lions or in the seven times heated furnace. They could neither be affrighted nor allured, they would be true to Jehovah whatever befell them. In a manner becoming this heroic past the prophet enlarged upon it without stint. Who but the God of their fathers had shut the mouths of the lions and deprived the fire of its power to burn? Had He not moved monarchs to bestow on His servants the highest offices and honors of a despotic foreign state, and brought about the downfall of their foes? Such was the theme of the first half of the work. It praised the virtues of a Daniel as a consecrated Hebrew who kept himself free from life's baser passions in order that he might give

a personal setting to the ultimate victory of God's cause.

The second half of the work consists of a series of predictive visions. Here again the writer adopted a prevalent literary practice. Taking the four hundred years of history which had elapsed since Daniel's time, he illustrated their inward meaning with prophetic utterances actually attributed to the chief character of his book. Its visions were presented in various symbolic forms but each one had the same *motif*. They described the fate of four great empires and predicted a like fate for a fifth. The four empires were symbolized as four strange beasts. The first was a lion with the pinions of an eagle which afterwards assumed the appearance of a human being. The second resembled a bear holding in its jaws the remains of its last victim. The third was like a four-headed leopard with wings lusty for flight. The fourth could not be compared to any living creature. It was a hideous ten-horned monster which crushed everything in its path.[1] The first empire so depicted was the Babylonian under Nebuchadrezzar; the second was the Medean empire under Darius; the third was the Persian empire under Cyrus, and the fourth was the far-flung empire of Alexander the Great. The ten horns symbolized the ten kings who were Alexander's successors. In his vision Daniel saw these rulers and their dominions fall like leaves in an autumn gale.

[1] Daniel 7:3-8.

But there was still another kingdom symbolized by "a little horn" which sprang up among the ten horns of the last-named beast. "And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." [2] The reference was to Antiochus Epiphanes who was depicted as defiling Jehovah's Holy House, committing "the transgression that maketh desolate, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot." [3] The seer asked the angel who mediated his vision how long this abomination was to continue, whereupon he answered, about three and a half years. Here actual history entered the absorbing recital, since Antiochus began his attempt to destroy Judaism in 168 B.C., and in 165 B.C. the Temple was rededicated to its original religion by a rejoicing nation.

In a word, the author of this book assured his long-enduring fellow patriots that Antiochus would bite the dust as surely as his predecessors. "He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods; and he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done. . . . Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." [4] Not only does the seer limn in fantastic figures the downfall of

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[2] Daniel 7:8.
[3] Daniel 8:13.
[4] Daniel 11:36, 45.

empires, but he also predicts the establishment of the kingdom of God which is to follow that downfall. "In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. . . . It shall stand forever." [5]

The message couched in such hieratic terms for those to whom it was given seems to have had an immediate effect. It is reasonably certain that the Book of Daniel was a factor in the Maccabean revolt. If it did not originate that outbreak assuredly it helped it. And perhaps a brief reference to the beginning of the revolt casts a sidelight on the prophet's mission. One of the emissaries of Antiochus ordered Mattathias, the aged priest of a hamlet near the Dead Sea, to sacrifice to Zeus; whereupon the priest slew the pagan emissary and fled with his five sons to the hills. There they raised Israel's banner and defied the monarch. The insurrection spread rapidly and thousands of Jews rallied to its appeal. It was headed by Judas, called Maccabee or "the Hammerer," the third son of the heroic Mattathias. The skill and daring of this warrior were almost fabulous. With a poorly equipped force he vanquished the seasoned veterans of Antiochus. Nothing could resist his assaults. Jerusalem was recaptured, a ruler of Israel's own choice was enthroned, the Temple was purified, and after three and a half years of bitter suffering, the sacrifices of Jehovah

[5] Daniel 2:44.

were once more offered there on the twenty-fifth day of December, 165 B.C.

Here, as in the Book of Jonah, the chief essential is the spirit of the writer. We do not know who he was but we are fully aware that he summoned his nation to one of faith's bravest adventures and to one of its most remarkable spiritual conquests. The lessons history had taught him were applied to demonstrate that the bestiality of physical force could not defeat the Divine Will. There is a difference as of day from night between the Book of Daniel and that of Esther written only a generation later for a degenerate Israel. As in Jonah, so in Daniel, Hebrew prophecy burst into a resplendent aura of vision and of dream which was the final flash of its expiring fires.

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It should be remembered that the books discussed in this fragmentary review, actually represent the sifted treasures of the religious literature of the Hebrew nation. Parts of that literature did not survive the vicissitudes of a prolonged and distracted era during which sheer anarchy of political and moral control frequently prevailed. Out of these chaotic conditions and beneath God's directing mind came the prophetic messages of elect spirits who were the heralds of His will not only for Israel but for mankind. Milton has justly eulogized them in *Paradise Regained:*

"As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of Civil Government
In their majestic unaffected style
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so,
What ruins kingdoms and lays cities flat."

Their claim upon the reverence of all future generations requires no further comment here. The impressive idealizations of these paladins of the Lord's people by that gifted artist, Mr. Frank O. Salisbury, would give dignity to any volume. I am indeed fortunate that he has kindly consented to bestow them on mine.

I send it on its errand escorted by Mr. Salisbury's great genius for portraiture with the prayer that it may at least in some way, however obscure, enforce the appeal of Israel's prophets for righteousness and peace, for justice and mercy. Surely these are the blessings sorely needed by our age, and they can only be obtained by humble submission to the God of our fathers who is the Rock of our Salvation.

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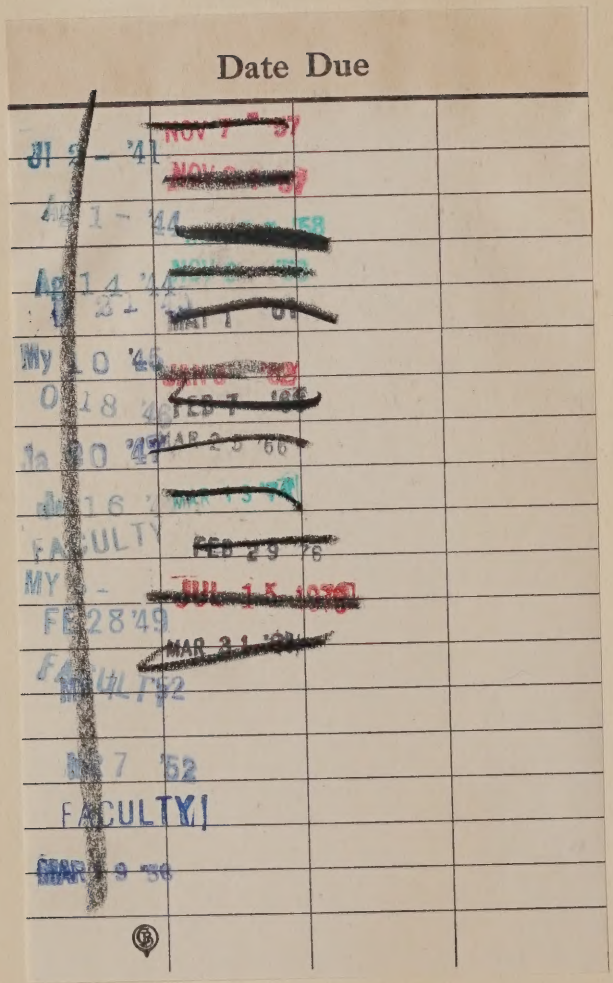
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